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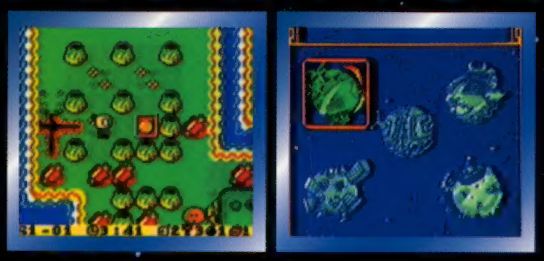

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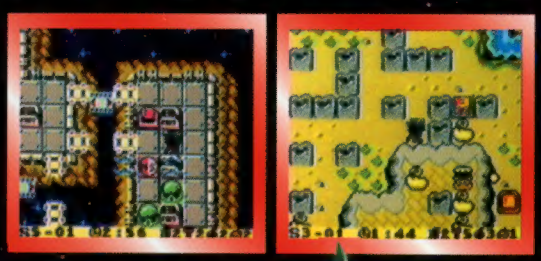

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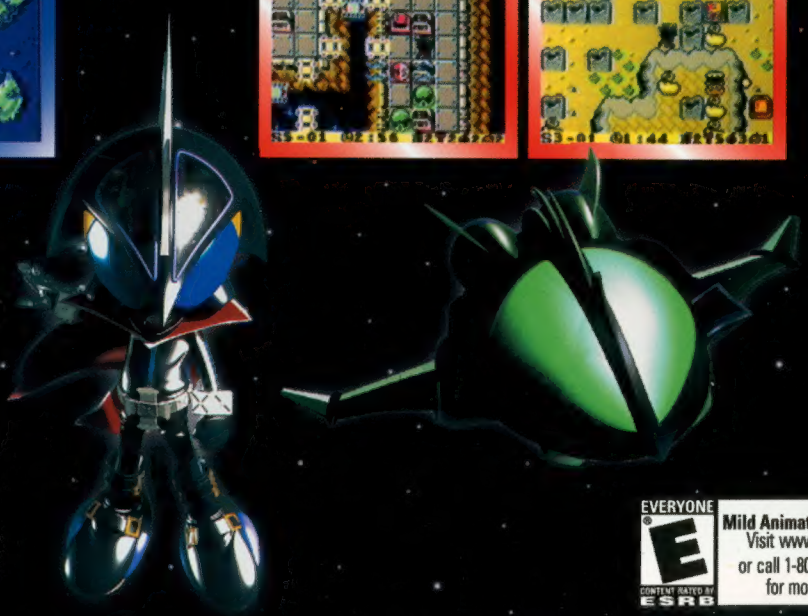

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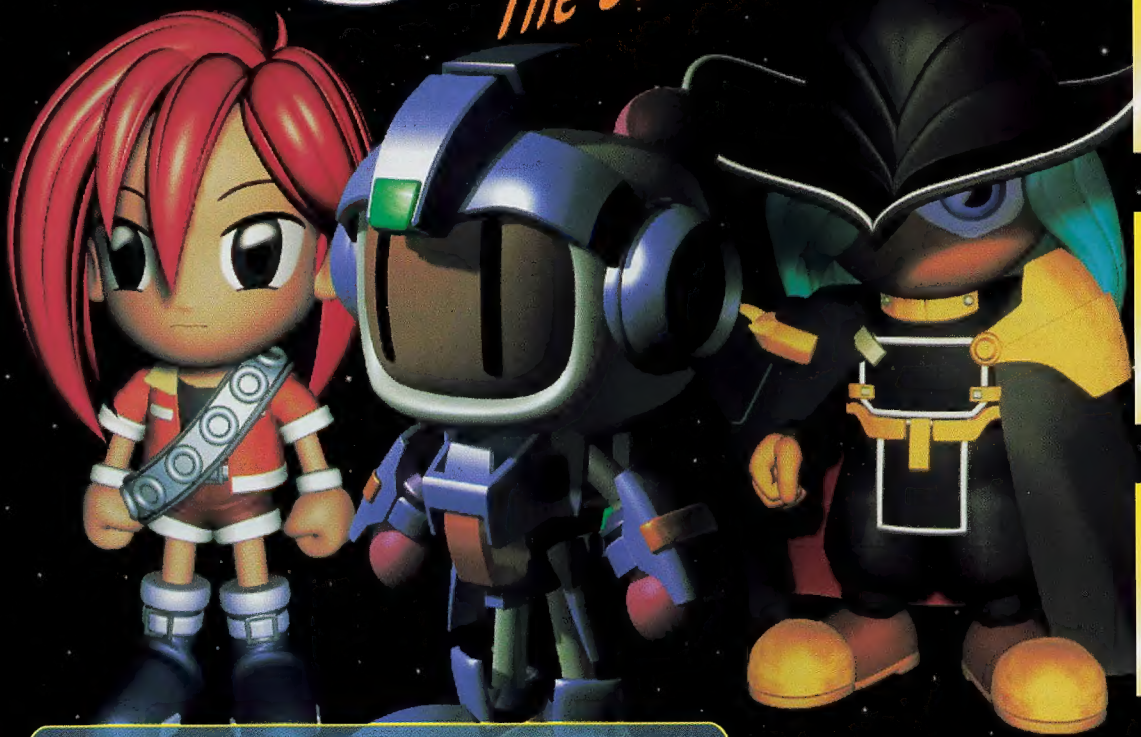

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gamers' Republic MANIFESTO

The topics swirling around the industry: Sega's ambitious online strategy and ultimate ruin and the looming arrival of the PS2 on U.S. shores has got everyone's panties in a bunch, so let's have a look at the issues from a gamer's point of view and see what gives. The video-game industry seems to have its own economy. In any other big business, the arrival of new competing technology rarely equates to reports of the imminent demise of the current competition. I've read all of the death-of-Sega jargon I can stomach, ironically from many of the same sources that reported on the console's record-breaking launch. We sit here at the beautiful lakeside offices of GR, day after day, discussing all of the amazing Dreamcast games on the horizon as well as games like MDK 2, DOA 2, Berserk, and Super Magnetic Neo that we're playing now, only to turn around and read that, sorry, this is all going to end soon. Sony is coming and that's game over, dudes.

Will Sony be bigger? Yes, most likely, unless a tsunami hits. Will it be better? Well, that remains to be seen. The launch wasn't exactly the end-all-do-all we expected, but in the long run the hardware is superior in many ways. Still, that's for the developers to decide. The point is that Sega and Nintendo and, er, Microsoft will likely all go about their business and host a diversity of good and bad games on their new video-game consoles in the years ahead, until we all stop to innovate once again. So it has always been, so it will likely always be. As for Sega's online strategy, well, it will undoubtedly put butts in the seats, and so on that level I think it's a good move. Personally, I think an all-out Dreamcast price reduction needs to follow to seal the deal in terms of getting ready to counter Sony. As one who has always preferred the personal experience that gaming tenders rather than the communal frag-for-all or strategy session you get online, I'm not wild about online gaming. But as long as Sega.com doesn't sap Sega's off-line lineup, I won't burn their houses down. Plus, online gaming down the road may offer more in terms of overall game design and interactivity. As it becomes more lucrative, a larger and more diverse cross section of designers and programmers will surely provide the diversity and innovations needed to insure its prolonged popularity and hopefully, someday, profitability. On a somber note, it's been reported that the Dolphin and Game Boy Advance (the savior of 2D) will not be at E3, so I'm not going.

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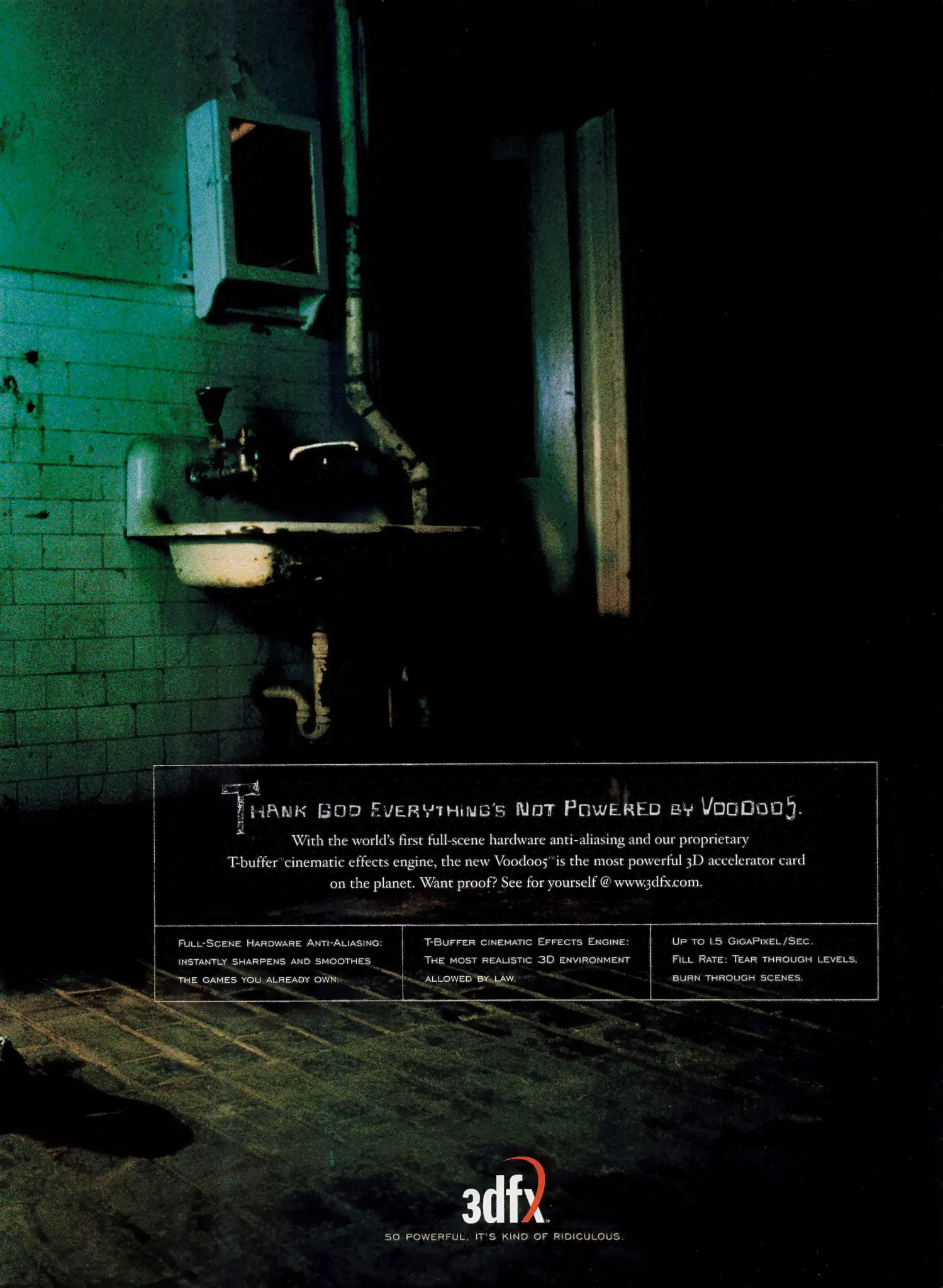
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TOKYO GAME SHOW .22

Some would say that this year's TGS was less than spectacular, and while it may not have been the best ever, there's no denying that there were some great new games on hand. Check out Zone of the Enders, Jet Set Radio, Silpheed, and the rest of this year's bounty, starting on page 22.

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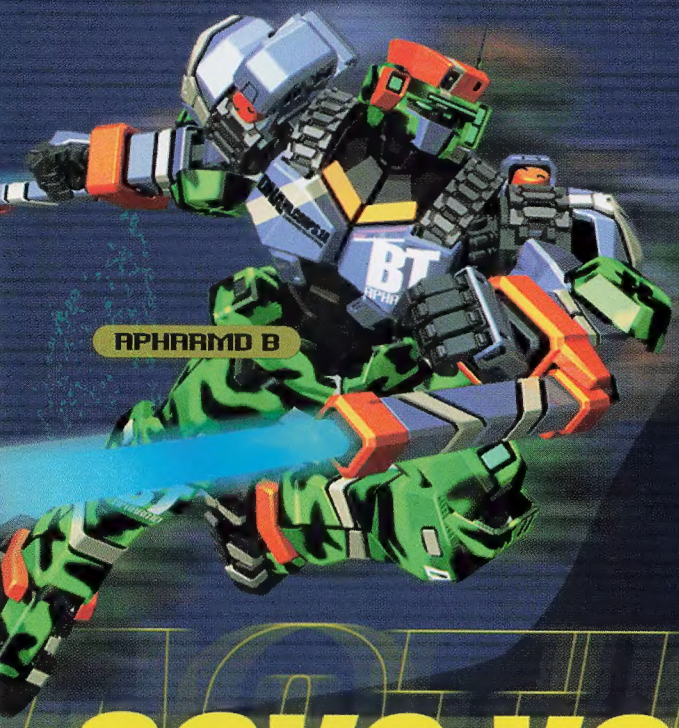
ONI .18

Hoping to do for action and adventure what Myth and Myth 2 did for strategy role-playing, Bungie's Oni is not only unique and engaging in every way, but PS2 bound as well. With its anime exterior and intriguing blend of hand-to-hand combat and gun play, here's a game worth reading about.



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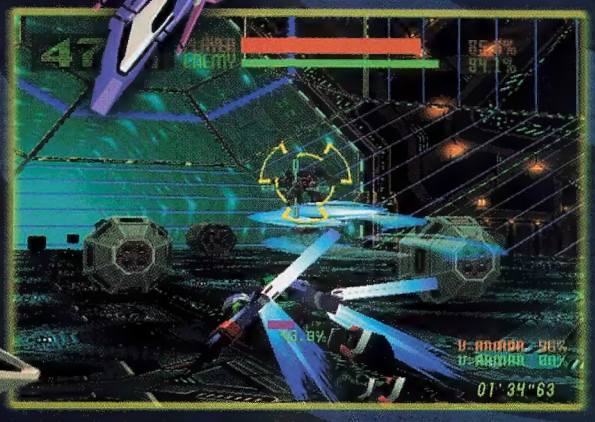

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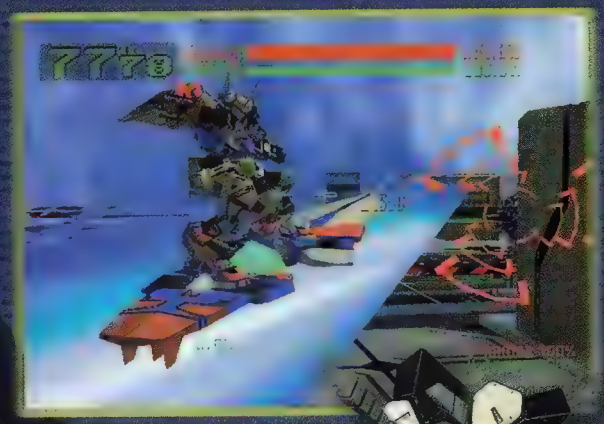

The wildly popular arcade game comes to your Sega Dreamcast™ in a perfect detail-by-detail sequel. You won't believe how exact, how frenetic and explosive it is... until you take on a 60-foot enemy with your extinction on its mind.

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電脳戦機バーチャロン
VIRTUAL ON
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MONTHLY GAMING NEWS

FRONTLINES

WOULD YOU PAY...NOTHING FOR A DREAMCAST?

In a move looked upon by industry pundits as both desperate and intelligent, in April, Sega announced the formation of a new, independent company, Sega.com, with the intention of becoming "the definitive online destination for gamers." The first video-game hardware manufacturer to roll out a comprehensive online strategy, Sega, in an attempt to ensure the success of the new venture, will (in essence) give free Dreamcast systems to anyone who subscribes to a two-year commitment to their new Internet gaming company's ISP–SegaNet. Those who purchase a Dreamcast and sign up for SegaNet at retail outlets will receive a $200 rebate check and a free keyboard on site; those who already own a Dreamcast, will receive the $200 rebate and free keyboard once they've registered.

The SegaNet service will launch in the U.S. on September 7, 2000, and will cost a flat rate of $21.95 per month. Sega plans on having 10-12 online games ready for launch, including Quake III Arena, NFL 2K1, NBA 2K1 and the highly anticipated Phantasy Star Online. The company has allocated $100 million to Sega.com, with half of the amount being spent on the launch of the venture alone.

The ISP connectivity will be provided by GTE Internetworking, as they are creating a custom-made portal that will hopefully provide the high-speed, low-latency connection needed for online gaming. Sega has stated that the latency will be 200 milliseconds or less.

In addition to online games, Sega plans on providing an array of other content—chat rooms, personal e-mail, tournaments, e-commerce, entertainment, lifestyle areas—hoping to make Sega.com the one-stop source for gamers. Sega's got even bigger Internet plans in the future. Eventually, SegaNet will be available for cable modem users, and in the fourth quarter of this year, an Ethernet card will be released for the Dreamcast. Sega is also planning accessories, including an MP3 player (for Sega.com music downloads) that connects through the DC controller.

While giving away free hardware may seem like an extremely risky business model to Sega's competitors, if the tactic pays off and Sega is able to address all of the connectivity and latency issues that plague online gaming, the company may be able to sit back and watch as Sony, Nintendo and even Microsoft scramble to launch their own portals.

DO YOU SUE YAHOO?

What do Nintendo, Sega and Electronic Arts have in common? If you said they all are huge and powerful companies in the video-game industry who create great games, you are correct. I would also have accepted the answer that they all have joined forces in filing a lawsuit against Yahoo! in order to stop the sale of illegal and counterfeit video-game products on the Internet giant's auction and retail areas.

The unprecedented joint suit is the first time members of the video-game industry have taken an online retailer to court. Although no particular products have been identified, the action against Yahoo! calls for the immediate halt to auctions and sales of counterfeit PC and console software and illegal devices "designed to circumvent copyright protection." In the suit, the companies are seeking damages as compensation for the losses caused by the illegal sales of their products.

The companies stated, "Yahoo! directly profits from the sale of illegal goods on its site, is fully aware of the illegal activity, and has the resources and technological means to prevent it. Under applicable law, Yahoo! is legally liable for the infringing activity it is facilitating."

Additionally stating that Yahoo! is knowingly providing these services for illegal activities and profiting from the revenue generated by its auction and retail activities, the company is being charged with copyright and trademark infringement, offering illegal devices for sale to the public, and unfair competition.

"We have advised Yahoo! many times that easily identifiable counterfeit, unpublished and illegal goods are being sold on its site, and we have asked them to implement effective controls to prevent the posting of illegal goods," says Richard Flamm, General Counsel for Nintendo of America Inc. "Yet while they have the responsibility and capability, they have refused to do this. Regrettably, therefore, we feel that legal action is now our only remaining recourse. The action we're taking today is not only designed to clean up Yahoo!'s site, but to send a message to Internet software pirates that there are no safe havens for those who steal the industry's creative products. If the great potential of the Internet for our industry and our economy is to be fully realized, leading companies like Yahoo! must accept their responsibility to prevent illegal activity in cyberspace."

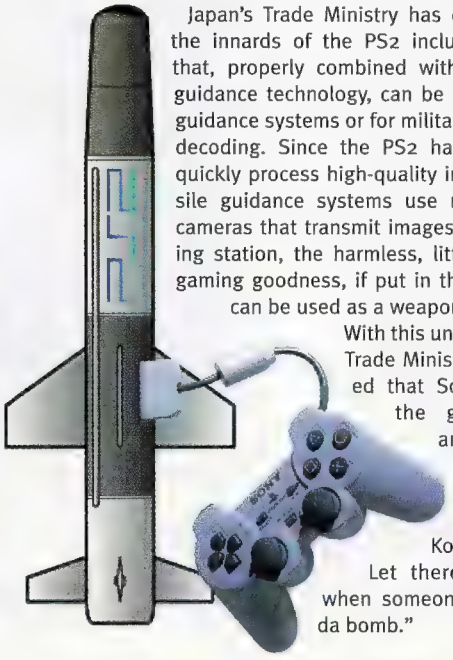
If you think that the big three companies are just bullying little ol' Yahoo! and don't have anything to lose in the counterfeit-based suit, just consider that in 1999 alone, American PC and console publishers lost an estimated $3.2 billion due to pirated software alone. Do you....um....Yahoo!?

WD, PUPPET MASTERS!

Working Designs is known and loved for providing cool promotions and goodies with their games, but their latest deal is the most unique of all. Fans who pre-purchase Lunar 2: Eternal Blue at participating stores will get a free boxing puppet of Ghaleon, the villain of the original Lunar (who also returns for the sequel). Designed in conjunction with Toshiyuki Kubooka, the character designer for the Lunar series, the puppet comes in collectors' packaging and is available exclusively through this promotion. Additionally, Working Designs has announced the pack-in bonuses with Lunar 2: a full-size gold metallic version of Lucia's pendant (like the one she wears in the game), four miniature character standees, the previously announced music CD, making-of CD, hardcover artbook/manual and map. Lunar 2 is scheduled to ship this summer.

PS2 BOMBS IN KOREA!

For those of you out there who just happen to have a Martin Marietta AGM-142 Popeye, medium range, air-to-surface guided missile lying around your backyard, unused because you have no means to control it, your problems may be solved as the PlayStation 2 just happens to include components for missile guidance systems. Talk about powerful hardware!



Japan's Trade Ministry has determined that the innards of the PS2 include components that, properly combined with other weapon guidance technology, can be used for missile guidance systems or for military weapons data decoding. Since the PS2 has the ability to quickly process high-quality images, and missile guidance systems use missile-mounted cameras that transmit images to a remote firing station, the harmless, little black box of gaming goodness, if put in the wrong hands, can be used as a weapon of destruction!

With this understanding, the Trade Ministry officials stated that Sony may export the gaming system anywhere in the world except for Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea.

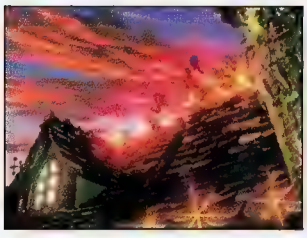
Let there be no doubt when someone says, "PS2 is da bomb."

COKE PUTS THE FIZZ IN FINAL FANTASY

Square recently announced that Final Fantasy IX will be released in Japan on July 19, 2000, but Final Fantasy fans will get to experience the game's world and characters early, thanks to a partnership with Coca-Cola. The FFIX cast is appearing in an original, computer-generated, 30-second commercial on Japanese television created by Square that features the characters in a colorful celebration as the Japanese Coca-Cola slogan "TSU-NA-GA-RU!" is displayed on screen.

Though the actual CG is not from the game, it uses the same technology, as well as music that will be in FFIX. Additionally, a boatload of Final Fantasy premiums will be given away as prizes in Coke's latest promotion. People who purchase 1-liter bottles of Coke will have a chance to win cards and figurines featuring the characters from Final Fantasy VII, VIII and IX, plus other non-FF prizes. A total of 72 figurines, including both normal and super-deformed versions of the characters, are in the figurine set.

In other Final Fantasy news, Square has told a Japanese newspaper that they plan to begin beta testing Final Fantasy X on PlayStation 2 and PC this fall, presumably to perfect the game's online features.



SONY MODEM

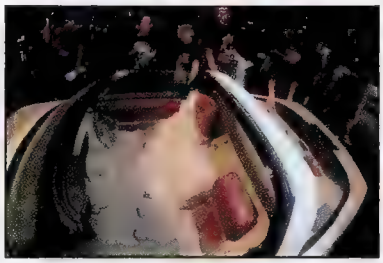
Not willing to sit idle while Sega readies its extensive Internet strategy, Sony is rumored to be turning up the heat by having a modem of its own ready at the PlayStation 2's launch in the U.S. this fall. According to a report by the financial-oriented Bloomberg news agency, Sony will release not only the modem, but a hard drive as well. As we go to press, Sony is neither confirming nor denying the story. If true, could Sony end up bundling a modem with the PS2 system? Selling the PS2 with a modem included would push the price up, but it would also let the system compete more directly with Sega's Dreamcast. We figure the hard drive will almost certainly be sold separately. Sony will likely reveal the full specs on the modem and hard drive, along with the other PS2 launch details, at the E3 show in May.

GR SLAMMIN' AT WWF AXXESS

From March 31 to April 2, the WWF held its fan festival, WWF Axxess, at the Anaheim Convention Center in California, and GR was there to bring our own brand of mayhem to the already wild world of professional wrestling. Thousands of fans from 38 states and 11 countries came to Axxess to meet their favorite stars live, buy their merchandise and, of course, play the WWF video games. Aside from playing WWF Wrestlemania 2000 on N64 and WWF SmackDown! on PS, fans at the GR booth also got to try out the PlayStation 2 with games like Ridge Racer V and Street Fighter EX 3.

Gamers also got to lock up with the GR staff in versus matches and enter a drawing to win a free Dreamcast (which went to Luis Martinez of Riverside, CA). At the Jakks Pacific booth, the toy maker showed off its upcoming line of Real Scan action figures that look more realistic than ever before, thanks to a new laser scanning process that re-creates wrestlers' faces almost flawlessly. But the better news for gaming fans is that according to SensAble Technologies, one of the companies behind the Real Scan technology, the same process can be used to put incredibly realistic facial and body textures on video-game characters. A SensAble employee said they've already spoken to companies like Acclaim about using it in upcoming games.

Aside from game-related activities, the fans were able to give commentary on famous matches, check out famous vehicles used on WWF TV (like Sgt. Slaughter's Slaughtermobile Cadillac) and line up for autograph and photo sessions with every superstar from Shawn Michaels to Tazz.



CASTLEVANIA R.I.P. ?

In what looks like a death-dealing blow to Castlevania fans everywhere, Konami has indefinitely delayed the release of Castlevania for Dreamcast. After a dismal showing on the Nintendo 64, we were ready for a little vindication with what looked to be the first formidable Castlevania in 3D. But now, after nearly two years of development, Konami has seemingly pulled the plug. Does this mean the franchise is now dead and buried and that the game will never see the light of day on Dreamcast? Well, we certainly hope not. The wise thing to do would be for Konami Japan to step up and craft a 2D version for either the DC or PS2, a follow-up to the masterpiece Symphony of the Night. We're not holding our breath.

GR FAMITSU FAME

During the Tokyo Game Show, the number one gaming publication in Japan, *Famitsu Magazine*, interviewed GAMERS' REPUBLIC veterans Mike Hobbs and Jun Sakai for their magazine and web site (www.famitsu.com). The meeting was held for the Famitsu staff to learn about how the foreign press reports on the TGS. The conversation was held at a private dinner at a high-class hotel in Japan, and discussions centered around what Hobbs and Sakai played at TGS, what their thoughts were on the games they saw and the show in general, what they felt about the industry as a whole, the U.S. market, used games, and a variety of game-related topics.

GB PHONE HOME

The cell phone boom is creeping into the handheld game market. Nintendo released some surprising and exciting news in April with the announcement of combined Game Boy and mobile phone capability in 2001. The cell phone/GB compatibility is currently being developed in accordance with the new cellular phone data transfer technology that is to be implemented within the next year.

As a matter of fact, the new GB Advance comes with an adapter that connects to a cellular phone, enabling users to download and communicate. Also, a previously postponed cellular phone adapter for the GB Color will be released this fall.

As of press time, Nintendo is unsure as to which system the new cell phone technology will be incorporated into. "We are planning to release the new portable game machine in addition to Game Boy Advance and communication adapter," says Nintendo of Japan. "However, whether the machine will be Game Boy Color- or Game Boy Advance-based has not been decided."

X-BOX DEVELOPING

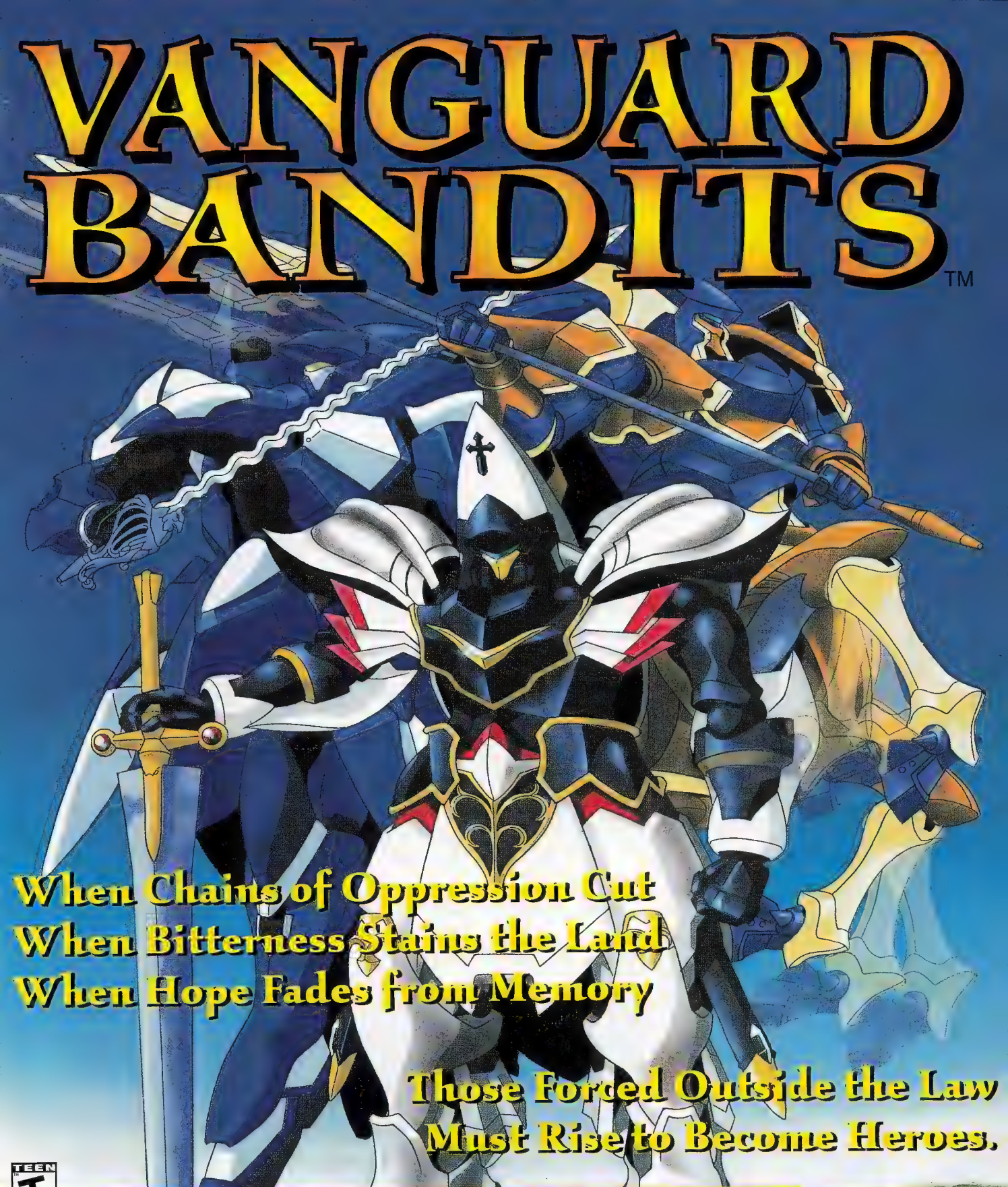
As the video-game industry grows, so does the game development community and, in turn, new game companies spring up. The tricky part for a new game design company is getting that one big break, proving it has what it takes to make it in the business. That's what makes Pipeworks Software's story so unbelievable. The software company is less than four months old, founded in November 1999, but—with a press release announcement—is already the number one third-party software company associated with the X-Box.

At the Microsoft X-Box announcement at the Game Developer's Conference on Friday, March 10, Bill Gates demonstrated some of the capabilities of his new machine. Everyone thought that the three gorgeous graphic demos were created by Microsoft's in-house teams. It turns out that Pipeworks was the company behind the impressive displays.

"These demos were developed solely for the X-Box platform," said Dan Duncalf, president of Pipeworks Software, Inc. "Our goal was to show the awesome power of X-Box and the ingenuity, creativity, and technical expertise of Pipeworks."

The company has yet to announce any official titles.

VANGUARD BANDITS™



When Chains of Oppression Cut
When Bitterness Stains the Land
When Hope Fades from Memory

Those Forced Outside the Law
Must Rise to Become Heroes.

TEEN T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

WORKING DESIGNS®

Our games go to 11!™

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PLAYING TAG WITH NAMCO R&D

Namco held a press conference for the press on April 4, where the development of Ridge Racer V and Tekken Tag Tournament for the PlayStation 2 was discussed. Namco also hosted competitions for the members of the press, as well as interviews with the staffs of the RRV and TTT R&D teams.

Members of the press fought for bragging rights in Ridge Racer V and Tekken Tag Tournament, the latter shown here.

Noting the differences in TV standards between NTSC (U.S., Japan, etc.) and PAL (Europe), Namco showed video footage of their forthcoming PAL titles such as Ghoul Panic, Rescue Shot, Dragon Valor, Mr. Driller, Time Crisis: Project Titan and, of course, Ridge Racer V and Tekken Tag Tournament. Then, general topics about the development of RRV and TTT were discussed.

For instance, development for both RRV and TTT took about one year each (simultaneously), with roughly 50 people involved in the development of RRV, and around 60 for TTT. It was mentioned that the concept of RRV was to go back to the original Ridge Racer, but to add much more detail such as reflections, working headlights, and detailed backgrounds. Of course, the most important factors were enemy cars' AI, the impression of speed, and overall smoothness (60fps). On the Tekken side, Mr. Harada said that the goal was a perfect conversion of the arcade in playability with improved graphics.

After each game's general introduction, we moved to an interview room to hear about the development of these games from Namco R&D staffs (see Q&A below). After the interviews, a Tekken Tag Tournament Press Championship and Ridge Racer V Time Attack contest were held. Although GR could unfortunately win only once in TTT, and our time for RRV was the fastest until around the last four minutes of the competition, we got gifts from Namco, and will be giving them away on GR Online.

Finally, we were given a tour of Namco's R&D office. Unfortunately, no pictures were permitted, but we could see 500GP being developed for PS2. And one European press guy said that he saw the words "Soul Caliber 2" on a wall. Could it be on its way to PS2?

RIDGE RACER V R&D TEAM

GR: What were the most complex things in the development of RRV?

Jun Nakagawa (Lead Programmer): Everything was difficult since it was the first time we had developed for PS2. At the time of development, there were no tools, so we had to make our own libraries from scratch.

GR: Are you interested in the Microsoft X-Box?

JN: As a programmer and, personally, I am interested in X-Box. But what the company is going to do with the X-Box is undecided.

The RRV development team. Zoom!

GR: In Ridge Racer V, anti-aliasing was not used. Why is this?

JN: I can't answer this question easily. [Anti-aliasing] can be done, but it robs CPU power, so that if I used it, I'd have to give up something else.

GR: Why did the race queen change from Reiko to Ai? Has she been welcomed by users?

Hideaki Nakamura (Lead Graphic Director): Since Ridge Racer V is the first RR for PS2, I wanted to try something new. The user's reaction is as yet unknown.

GR: Why did you work with Boom Boom Satellite and Mijk van Dijk on the soundtrack?

HN: While I was listening to Boom Boom Satellite, I thought, I want this in Ridge Racer. Then, we showed [the band] pictures of RRV and asked to work with them. To increase the techno mood of the game, Mijk van Dijk was the one who came into my mind.

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT R&D TEAM

GR: Why was DVD-ROM not used for TTT?

Harada Katsuhiro (Project Director): DVD is suitable for long games such as RPGs, strategy titles, etc. Since a fighting game like TTT is a low-memory game, all that we can do with DVD is just add movies, increase the number of characters, etc. In fact, I wanted to use DVD, but we didn't have enough time since the mass production of DVDs takes much longer than normal CD-ROMs.

The TTT development team. Whoau-ta!

GR: Are you planning to make TTT2?

HK: Well, I don't know. I would say the next Tekken will be Tekken 4, rather than Tekken Tag Tournament 2.

PS2 2 2 MILLION

Sony recently announced that it had shipped 2 million PlayStation 2s as of April 16, surpassing the installed user base of Dreamcast by nearly half a million units in Japan. This installed base of PS2s puts the system firmly in the number three spot, trailing the original PS and N64, which has around five million units, and Sony hopes to pass this mark within the year. It will be interesting to see if Sega of Japan makes a move similar to SOA's recent unveiling of the Sega.com strategy. Here comes Sony...

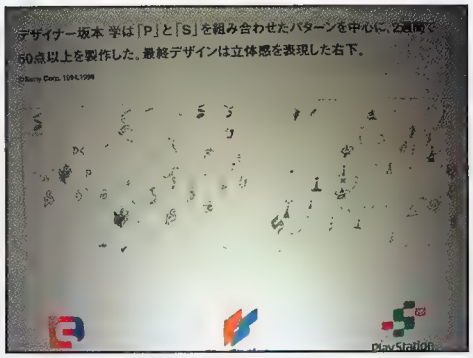
AN ANCIENT FORM OF COMMUNICATION ?

While out at the House of Blues on Sunset Blvd. here in Southern California, we stumbled upon some interesting advertising. Housed inside a sort of postcard directory, we found postcards for Nintendo and Sega products. Apparently people used to carve letters on these and then have uniformed agents drive them to their domiciles. As you may or may not know, video-game postcards are common in Japan, where just about every game receives at least one type of postcard, but we can't remember the last U.S. video-game product that heralded its own – besides Sega's Dreamcast adverts that were passed out during Sega-sponsored events late last year. The two we grabbed are for Nintendo's new N64 system colors and Sega's upcoming Space Channel 5. Hopefully more video-game companies will adopt this simple, collectible keepsake, perhaps leading people to adopt an ancient custom and take the time to "write" a friend rather than type a computer.

SONY PS ORIGINS AND OTHER ODDITIES...

After the 2000 Spring Tokyo Game Show was over, an exhibition called Digital Dream: Concept Mockups by Sony Design, hosted by Axis, Inc., was held at the Axis building in Tokyo, between April 3 and April 9. The exhibition focused on Sony's product designs and also offered a sneak peek of sorts into possible future products. The rather small venue was packed with those who carried the meticulous look of design-related people, and over 50 mock-ups, including prototype Walkmans, audio machines, and cameras were placed in a very simple yet stylish environment. Among the more intriguing displays were the concept mock-ups of the original PlayStation. Not only that, the initial designs of controllers as well as PS logos could be seen. The exhibition had the air of a once-in-a-lifetime affair because, according to Mr. Nakaizum of Sony Design, "This kind of exhibition cannot often be held since various legal issues have to be taken into consideration." In regards to the question of PS2 design mock-ups, he replied, "It would take another two to three years before a public display was allowed."

The exhibition was certainly a feast for our eyes and must have been inspiring to those who aspire to become industrial designers.



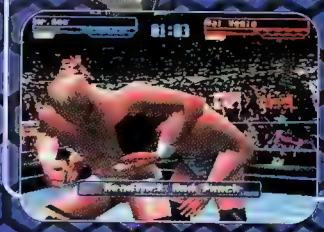
It took Manabu Sakamoto, the designer, two weeks to create the fifty initial designs that you see here.

MONTHLY CHARTS PROVIDED BY NPD DATA TRACKING SERVICES

database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS

top ten selling playstation titles



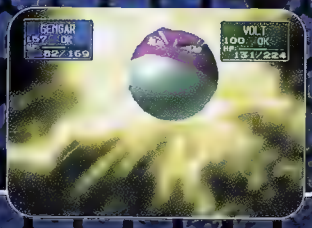
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MARCH 2000

1.	WWF SMACKDOWN!	THQ	6.	TRIPLE PLAY 2001	EA
2.	SYPHON FILTER 2	989 STUDIOS	7.	SYPHON FILTER	989 STUDIOS
3.	GRAN TURISMO 2	SONY	8.	DUKES OF HAZZARD	SOUTHPEAK
4.	T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	9.	FEAR EFFECT	EIDOS
5.	SPYRO THE DRAGON	SONY	10.	NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 3	NAMCO

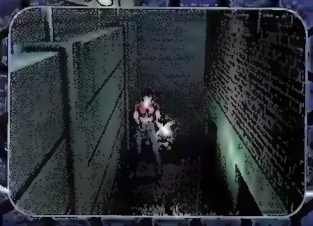
top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MARCH 2000

1.	POKÉMON STADIUM	NINTENDO	6.	NAMCO MUSEUM 64	NAMCO
2.	MARIO PARTY 2	NINTENDO	7.	SUPER SMASH BROS.	NINTENDO
3.	WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000	THQ	8.	MARIO KART 64	NINTENDO
4.	T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	9.	SUPER MARIO 64	NINTENDO
5.	DONKEY KONG 64	NINTENDO	10.	GOLDENEYE 007	NINTENDO



top ten selling dreamcast titles



*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MARCH 2000

1.	RES EVIL: Code Veronica	CAPCOM	6.	CARRIER	JALECO
2.	DEAD OR ALIVE 2	TECMO	7.	SWORD of BERSERK	EIDOS
3.	CRAZY TAXI	SEGA	8.	NFL 2K	SEGA
4.	NHL 2K	SEGA	9.	ECW: HARDCORE REV.	ACCLAIM
5.	NBA 2K	SEGA	10.	LEGACY OF KAIN: SR	EIDOS

top ten selling pc titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MARCH 26-APRIL 1 2000

1.	THE SIMS	EA	6.	RLR COASTER TYCOON	HASBRO
2.	WHO WANTS..MILLION	DISNEY	7.	LEGO ISLAND	MINDSCAPE
3.	SOLDIER OF FORTUNE	ACTIVISION	8.	THIEF 2: The Metal Age	EIDOS
4.	SW: Force Commander	LUCASARTS	9.	C&C: Tib.Sun Firestorm	WESTWOOD
5.	STAR TREK: Armada	ACTIVSION	10.	UNREAL TOURNAMENT	GT INT.

top ten selling overall console titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MARCH 2000

1.	POKÉMON STADIUM-N64	NINTENDO	6.	POKÉMON RED-GB	NINTENDO
2.	WWF SMACKDOWN!-PS	THQ	7.	MARIO PARTY 2-N64	NINTENDO
3.	POKÉMON YELLOW-GBC	NINTENDO	8.	GRAN TURISMO 2-PS	SONY
4.	SYPHON FILTER 2-PS	989 STUDIOS	9.	T HAWK PRO SKATER-N64	ACTIVISION
5.	POKÉMON BLUE-GB	NINTENDO	10.	RES EVIL:Code Ver.-DC	CAPCOM

world republic top ten games

top ten japanese titles

1. KIRBY STAR 64	N64	6. WARIOLAND 3: The Mysterious Magic Box	GB
2. TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT	PS2	7. KESSEN	PS2
3. RIDGE RACER V	PS2	8. POCKET MONSTER SILVER	GB
4. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	PS2	9. BASS LANDING 2	PS
5. PAWAFURU KUN POCKET 2	GB	10. POCKET MONSTER GOLD	GB

* FROM APR 3 ~ APR 9 2000

top ten u.k. titles

1. POKEMON STADIUM	N64	7. STAR WARS: Force Commander	PC
2. F1 2000	PC, PS	8. GRAN TURISMO 2	PS
3. POKEMON RED	GB	9. THE SIMS	PC
4. POKEMON BLUE	GB	10. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE	PC
5. RESIDENT EVIL: Survivor	PS		
6. TOY STORY 2	GBC, N64, PS, PC		

* WEEK ENDING APR 8 2000

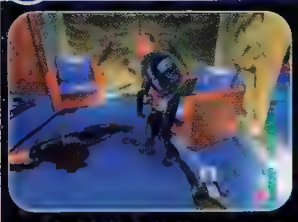
gamers' republic top ten games

* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH APR 15 2000

d. halverson

1. MDK 2	DC
2. EXCITEBIKE 64	N64
3. PERFECT DARK	N64
4. NTMR CREATURES 2	DC
5. FURFIGHTERS	DC
6. SPR MAGNETIC NEO	DC
7. ECCO	DC
8. KOF EVOLUTION	DC
9. ETERNAL ARCADIA	DC
10. BERSERK	DC

b. siechter

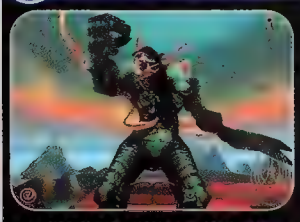


1. PERFECT DARK	N64
2. RIDGE RACER V	PS2
3. TEKKEN TAG TOURN	PS2
4. FANTAVISION	PS2
5. HOGS OF WAR	PS
6. ASTAL	SATURN
7. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	PS2
8. SYMPHONY of NIGHT	PS
9. STRIDER 2	PS
10. EXCITEBIKE 64	N64

mike hobbs

1. TEKKEN TAG TOURN	PS2
2. VAGRANT STORY	PS
3. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	PS2
4. MARVEL vs CAPCOM 2	DC
5. ETERNAL ARCADIA	DC
6. FANTAVISION	PS2
7. NGEN	PS
8. GRADIUS III & IV	PS2
9. KIRBY 64	N64
10. DRIVING EMO. TYPES	PS2

t. stratton

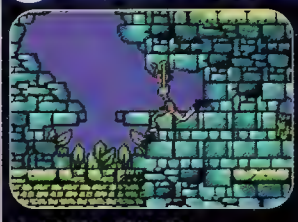


1. GIANTS: Citizen Kabuto	PC
2. NFL 2K	DC
3. STRIKER PRO	DC
4. RIDGE RACER V	PS2
5. MDK 2	DC
6. GUITAR FREAKS	PS
7. WAVERACE 64	N64
8. SILENT HILL	PS
9. NBA 2K	DC
10. LGD/MYST. NINJA	SNES

pooch

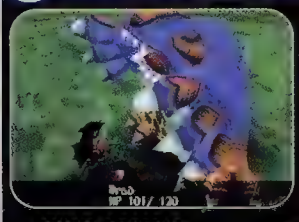
1. RIDGE RACER V	PS2
2. PERFECT DARK	N64
3. TRIPLE PLAY 2001	PS
4. FEAR EFFECT	PS
5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	N64
6. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	DC
7. TEKKEN TAG TOURN.	PS2
8. CRAZY TAXI	DC
9. OW: Abe's Exoddus	PS
10. OW: Abe's Oddysee	PS

edd gear



1. TOMB RAIDER	GBC
2. BUST-A-MOVE 2	PS
3. WARIO 3	GBC
4. GRAN TURISMO 2	PS
5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	PS
6. SPYRO 2	PS
7. LOONEY TUNES: Coll.	GBC
8. NFS PORSCHE	PS
9. DINOSAURS	GBC
10. SURVIVAL KIDS	GBC

j. r. haugen



1. WILD ARMS 2	PS
2. PERFECT DARK	N64
3. SPR CASTLEVANIA IV	SNES
4. TEKKEN TAG TOURN	PS2
5. VAGRANT STORY	PS
6. TONDEMO CRISIS	PS
7. LEGEND OF DRAGOON	PS
8. LEGEND OF MANA	PS
9. THREADS OF FATE	PC
10. GOEMON'S GR. ADV.	N64

c hossman

1. MARVEL vs CAPCOM 2	DC
2. TEKKEN TAG TOURN	PS2
3. LUNAR 2: Eternal Blue	PS
4. LEGEND OF MANA	PS
5. STRIDER 1 & 2	PS
6. CODE: VERONICA	DC
7. GRADIUS III & IV	PS2
8. VANGUARD BANDITS	PS
9. KOF '99 EVOLUTION	DC
10. SNATCHER	SEGA CD

A shadowy sci-fi and anime-inspired world comes to vivid life in Bungie's Oni

There is no way of knowing what our future truly holds. It is this fascinating mystery that stirs the imagination, inspiring films like *The Matrix* and *Blade Runner* and anime like *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* to offer us their own intriguing answers.

Oni is not unlike those science fiction films, attempting to spark a sense of wonder with its grim world forever caught in the shadows. With the liberating power of the PlayStation 2, the Oni developers are able to create a future world that closely resembles what they pictured in their minds. Even though the game is only two months into its production, there is already depth and sophistication to its visuals, underpinned by absorbing architectural design. One of the more interesting areas begins in the lobby of a 15-story office building, which is wrapped in towering rows of glass and looming support beams. At the top of the building, accessed through spacious lobbies and tiny cubicles, is a roof of glass, revealing a marvelous view of the atrium far below. You are free to explore every section of this sprawling building, even move outside to do battle in the streets surrounded by a dense jungle of office towers.

As an elite operative named Konoko, you are part of the Technology Crimes Task Force, a premier law enforcement agency attempting to bring down a powerful group called the Syndicate. It is the year 2032, a time when immense cities devour all life and supreme technology is the foundation for survival. Crime is a cancer that threatens to choke what little hope is left in society, and you must become the temporary cure.

Strapped with pistols, rocket launchers, and energy and projectile weapons, Konoko is well prepared for pulse-pounding confrontations with over 100 opponents, free to instantaneously switch between weapons and hand-to-hand combat. A game of kinetic excitement, Oni focuses on tactical challenges rather than platforming and typical button-pushing and find-the-key puzzles, and Bungie is concentrating on ensuring that every task and move can be executed effortlessly. Even the most complex throws, combos, and escapes can be performed with simple commands, often determined by your proximity to an enemy.

Oni is a game of big adventure and expansive story, but its source of power is endlessly explosive action. The true intricacies of the game will

only be revealed as it continues to evolve. Exactly where Bungie hopes to take its ambitious Oni project is revealed in the following interview with company president Alex Seropian and Rockstar president, Sam Houser.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: Does the gameplay take place predominantly in one building or corporation, or does it move around?

Alex Seropian: Oh, it moves. There are 17 massive levels – mostly urban, but some more natural settings. Most levels have both indoor and outdoor environments, comprising not just one building but many.

GR: Is the game set up in traditional levels with guardians at the end of each?

AS: No. The term "bosses" is somewhat misleading. Oni shouldn't be thought of as a traditional action game with bosses at the end of each level. There are special opponents that are particularly challenging, and take particular skill to defeat, but they occur at various points in various levels, as consistent with the progress of the story. The Iron Demon counts as one of these, and the player encounters it more than once, one time in the middle of a level. In some circumstances, it may be possible to avoid these opponents rather than having to destroy them, but players won't be able to do that all the time.

Sam Houser: I think the traditional end-of-level-boss idea is very tired – like find-the-key puzzles. People expect something a little more interesting and a lot less contrived these days.

GR: What kind of enemies are you implementing?

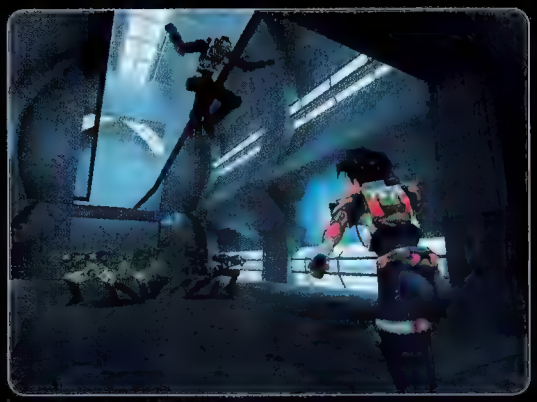
AS: Most of the opponents in Oni are human, and most of them working for the Syndicate, but Konoko does fight a mechanical enemy or two, like the Iron Demon, a 12-foot., 5-ton robotic killing machine. That encounter is a good example of a level where players won't have the option of using hand-to-hand combat: no matter how badass the player is, they won't be able to stop the Iron Demon with punches or kicks. Fortunately, explosives and heavy weaponry are as big a part of Konoko's skillset as hand to hand. Overall, the opponents cover a broad range, from less-skilled dock workers and security guards to the armored "strikers" of the Syndicate – acrobatic and amazingly lethal ninja units. In the world of Oni, even many mundane characters will display fighting skills when provoked, from scientists to construction workers.

GR: Will there be lots of cinematics?

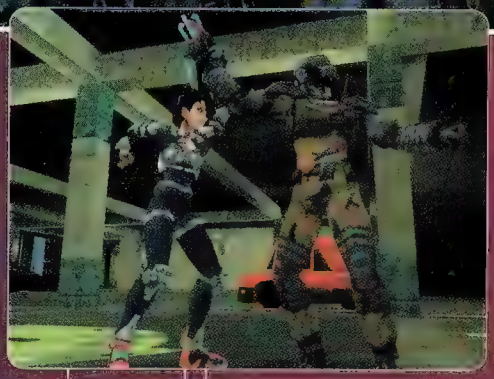
AS: Oni has both in-engine cutscenes, which transition smoothly into the action gameplay of the level, and 2D (anime) animation sequences at the beginning and end of the game. The in-engine cutscenes

004" 008"

Oni



Some enemies avoid you with such lightning-quick speed that they leave a blur trail (left). If you want to survive, sometimes running is the only option (right).



will occur before, sometimes during, and after each level, depending on what happens in the level, and the screen goes into letterbox format to show that a cutscene is running. The 2D anime is the product of AIC (Anime International Corporation), a studio involved in animating films such as *Akira* and *Bubblegum Crisis*.

So, one example of a cutscene transitioning into gameplay... there's a level where Konoko must investigate a manufacturing plant which is a front for the Syndicate. The level begins with Griffin briefing Konoko and two other TCTF officers in-engine. The scene cuts to Konoko and the other officers walking into the plant's main door, and asking the receptionist a question. Beneath the desk, the receptionist triggers a silent alarm, and two Syndicate thugs appear from a back room. As they run forward to attack Konoko and the officers, the letterbox format lifts, and the player has control of Konoko, facing the onrushing thugs.

SH: The power of the new hardware systems, both on consoles and PC, mean that pre-rendered cutscenes are thankfully becoming a thing of the past. There's no longer the need for some beautifully rendered scene which shows you what the characters are actually supposed to look like, because they look great in game. This has never been possible before; I always found that the beautifully rendered cutscenes could demean the in-game experience, as it reminded you just how duff it all looked.

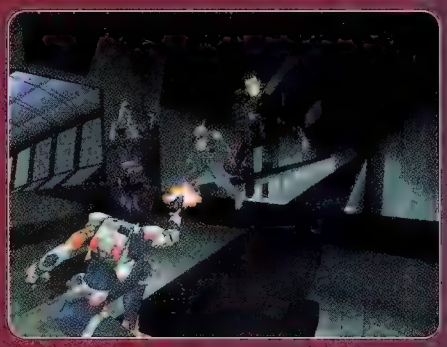
GR: Are you using voice-overs for dialogue? And will the use of story be important to the effect of the game?

AS: Yes, we are using voices for dialogue. The story is critical to the effect of the game. When a player finishes the game, we want it to have the same lasting effect on them as seeing a great anime like *Ghost in the Shell* does.

GR: What's it like developing for PS2?

SH: It is more challenging to develop good code on the PS2 because of the system's architecture. Not only do you have to know how to program in a multiprocessor environment, but you have to know how to write good code in low-level assembly language as well. Without a lot of this knowledge, you may be able to get something up and running, but you will not be able to harness the power of the

Konoko's been studying **The Matrix** ***(top). A cinematic cutscene warns of the chaos about to ensue.***



PS2. With the right kind of programming, this machine is an absolute powerhouse. When there is nothing between your code and the hardware, you know you're getting peak performance out of the machine. The main thing is that, although the system is very new, meaning a general lack of tools and experience, difficult coding is rewarded by absolutely stunning performance. I think once people get used to developing for the system, the overall quality of games being produced on it is going to be incredible. Graphically, it is better than anything available and this gives designers and artists the freedom to create an incredible array of virtual worlds. A game like Oni would be completely inconceivable on an older console. Look at the range of vaguely similar titles: there are some great games, but nothing that is anywhere near as beautiful as Oni, nor one that combines both kinds of fighting so effectively.

GR: The AI has been described as quite revolutionary. Are there many ways to complete each scenario? How many forms of attack does Konoko have?

AS: There are about 100 different hand-to-hand attacks Konoko can perform, if you add up all the different kicks and punches she can do in different postures (jumping, running, crouching), and then add all of her special moves into the mix. To describe a couple of these moves: her signature move is a sort of leaping neck twist – imagine a clothesline where she uses the opponents neck as a pivot to spin around; there's another one where she leaps into the air, does a somersault over her opponent's head, lands behind him, grabs him by the neck and throws him over her head. Also, Konoko develops new fighting skills as the game progresses. In early levels, hitting the "punch" key might yield a simple jab that does moderate damage, perhaps making the opponent take a step back. In later levels, as Konoko becomes more skilled and also, consistent with the story, more vicious, the same key might unleash a sledgehammer blow that could kill an opponent. And that's just the hand-to-hand — only 50 percent of the action. With about a dozen weapons she can use as well, players will be getting a lot of action in Oni. The AI for a game like this is tricky to code, since it has to be challenging whether armed or unarmed, and has to be able to choose which style of combat to use in any given situation. When responding to something the player does, each AI will consider a wide range of variables, such as the distance between them and their aggression level, and then specific units can have special-case responses coded. The mix of these traits gives the AI opponents a lot of room for individuality and personality.

GR: How do you plan to handle the music?

AS: We're going with a techno outfit known as Power of 7, who did great work on a couple of our Marathon games. They've got a sound that fits very well with Oni's near-future, urban, dystopian setting. People can listen to some of the tracks by going to MP3.com and searching for "Oni" or "Bungie."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 122 ▸

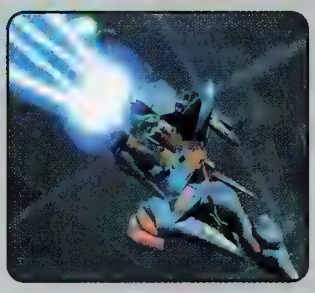
TGS 2000 SPRING

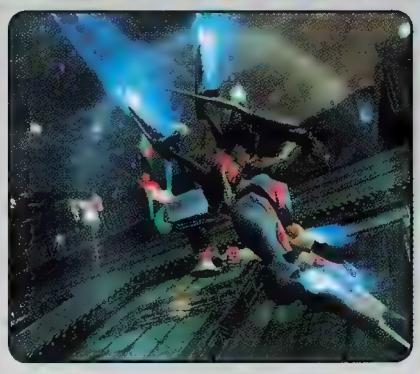
Expectations can be very dangerous, in the way that my expectations for the Tokyo Game Show 2000 Spring almost stopped me from enjoying it. Make no mistake, after perusing the show floor for the first time, I was upset and disappointed. Why? My expectation was that I would see a boatload of playable PS2 titles, and this was simply not the case. A quick tour of Sony's booth, where I expected to see all the games from last year's TGS in a more fully developed form, left me deeply underwhelmed. Gran Turismo 2000 was not there in any form, nor was The Bouncer at Square's booth (unless one counts a seconds-long bit of CG). But all was not lost, however. Sega, true to form, put on an ambitious show, with a big online push and truly standout titles like Eternal Arcadia, Phantasy Star Online, and Jet Set Radio. And seeing games like Konami's Z.O.E. helped my mood, even if it was only shown as a video demo.

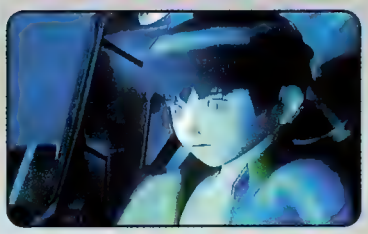
ZONE OF THE ENDERS

BY: KONAMI FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

I walked right past this title on the first day of the show. Sandwiched between dozens of other games on Konami's crowded demo reel, Zone of the Enders, or Z.O.E., as most will come to call it, is Hideo Kojima's first PS2 game. Though many were expecting Metal Gear Solid 2 to be the premier effort from the Konami design master, few were disappointed after seeing the Z.O.E. preview movie at this year's TGS. At first look resembling a cross between Omega Boost and Virtual On, this blazingly fast action game boasted stunning environment and character modeling, looking like nothing less than a living anime. Metal Gear Solid alum Yohji Arakawa will be providing his typically brilliant mechanical design to Z.O.E., joining Gundam X designer Masayoshi Nishimaru, with scenario writer Takaaki Okamura of Tokimeki Memorial rounding out the all-star creative staff. And, of course, overseeing everything is Hideo Kojima, and judging by the highly attuned sensibility he demonstrated on the PS' MGS, a potentially magnificent PS2 game is coming soon. When? Konami wouldn't say, but we expect and hope to see Z.O.E. before the end of the year.

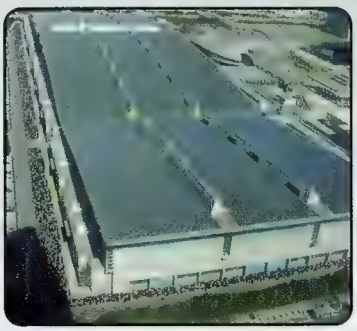






TOKYO GAME SHOW

The line to get in to the TGS 2000 Spring seemed little diminished from last year's, though official counts actually showed a slight drop in overall attendance—not too surprising considering that the last show hosted the official PS2 launch. With less crowds, we were actually able to play games like Samba de Amigo (right).



★JET SET RADIO
BY: SEGA FOR: DREAMCAST

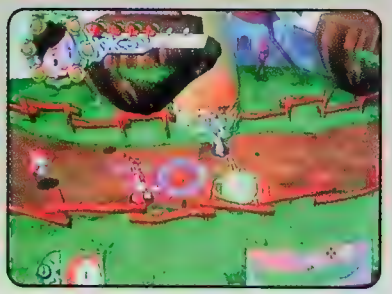
The star of Sega's impressive showing at this year's TGS had to be the playable version of Jet Set Radio. Like Sony's similarly realized TVDJ, Jet Set Radio used the power of the Dreamcast (along with some very clever programming and artists) to render polygonal characters that look hand drawn, complete with "ink" outlines and crisp, delineated shading. As impressive as the characters were the game's environments, which were vast, recalling Crazy Taxi, but with a very different, much more cartoony aesthetic.

Jet Set Radio's gameplay proved to be its most interesting aspect, however. Featuring a combination of trick in-line skating, like rail grinding, and the unique aspect of tagging (applying graffiti), players must avoid the grasp of rollerblading cops while marking different parts of the environment. The control was good, and considering the game's theme and look, JSR seemed tailor-made to American tastes, and we should see a big push from Sega of America later this year.

Games like Jet Set Radio elevated Sega's booth well above Sony's, where there was very little new to see for the PS2.

★NAPPLE TALE
BY: SEGA FOR: DREAMCAST

Tucked away almost out of sight next to the likes of Metropolis Street Racer, Sega's Napple Tale: Arsia in Daydream kept the idea of "old fashioned" gaming alive. Looking at first a little bit like Crystal Dynamics' forgotten Pandemonium series, Sega's so-called "Lovely Pop Action-RPG" featured mostly side-scrolling play with limited 3D movement and plenty of platforming, all in a bright, hyper-colorful and appealing polygonal world. Though we couldn't tell from our brief play what RPG elements were there, expect more from NT than straight action, platforming, and boss fighting.



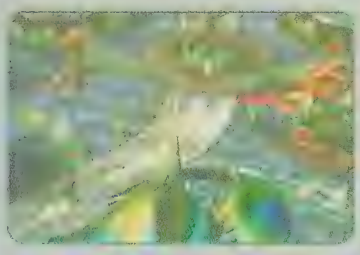
The Japanese love to put on a cute show, and TGS 2000 Spring was certainly no exception. SNK chimed in with their slightly twisted and lip-synced Cool Cool Tune stage show celebrating their new Dreamcast music/dancing game. And once again, Crash showed up at the Sony stage, joined by Spyro, there to promote the Japanese release of Spyro 2 for PlayStation. And is it just us, or has Rayman lost some weight in his trip across the ocean?

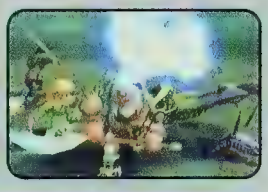
GRANDIA II

BY: GAMEARTS FOR: DREAMCAST

GameArts doesn't release many games, but when they do, the results are usually exceptional. The Lunar games, Silpheed, Gun Griffon and, of course, the original Grandia have all found devoted followings. Unfortunately for most Americans, the original Grandia never found its way to these shores on Saturn, and many had to make do with the inferior PS version. All that should change with Grandia II, as it will certainly get a U.S. release on Dreamcast.

Though it was not playable at the show, GameArts and Sega were kind enough to distribute a video of the game in action along with some assorted production paintings and behind-the-scenes footage, and along with Eternal Arcadia and Phantasy Star Online, GII looks as if it will cement the Dreamcast's reputation as the system for quality RPGs. With graphics that seem to push the DC as far as the original game pushed the Saturn's 3D capabilities, Grandia II was looking good.



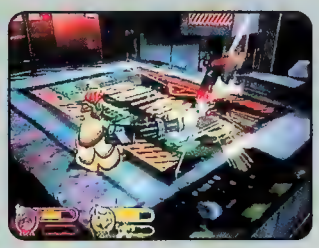
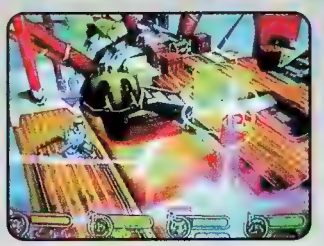


POWER STONE 2

BY: CAPCOM FOR: DREAMCAST

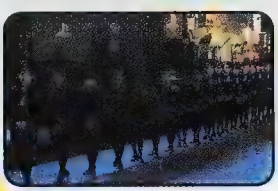
One of the best playable games on the show floor was Capcom's Power Stone 2, the four-player sequel to the Dreamcast favorite. Already available as a Naomi-powered arcade game, Capcom was showing off the expectedly perfect DC port, and as much as we hate this phrase, fans of the first are going to be in for a treat.

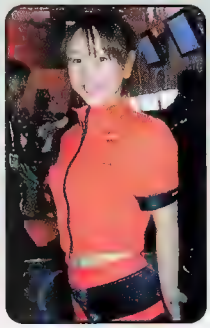
Due to the four-player dynamic of Power Stone 2, the arenas have been greatly increased in size, featuring a lot of vertical elements and an overall expansiveness missing from the first game. How this affects the play balance in the long term remains to be seen. Some of the new characters are a little questionable in design, but perhaps they too will grow on us as time goes on.

TOKYO GAME SHOW

Companies know that to leave a good impression on the male-dominated gaming press and game-playing public, it helps to have attractive women. One will hear few complaints from us, especially when taking in the precision of Sony's caterpillar leg-like bowing sequence at the end of the day.



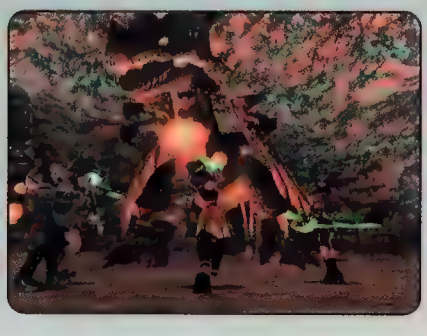


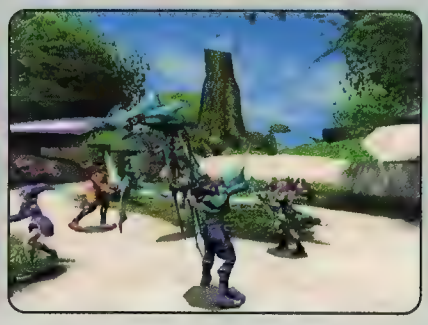
MSR
BY: SEGA FOR: DREAMCAST

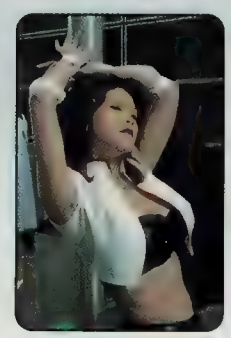
Bizarre Creations made quite a name for themselves among the hardcore racing contingent with their original Formula One game on PlayStation, pushing the system to new heights of track rendering and realism. Now that they've turned their sights to the Dreamcast, Bizarre Creations has once again raised the bar for reality-based racing. Metropolis Street Racer was looking incredibly good at this year's TGS, with a one-track demo showing off an amazingly rendered environment and true-to life car models, like the accurately reproduced Mitsubishi FTO pictured at left. And in fact, the game even looked a bit better overall than Sega GT, with far more trackside detail and a similarly stable frame rate hovering around 30. Joining this solid visual pedigree were licensed cars and what should prove to be thrilling racing action throughout cities around the world. And perhaps most importantly of all, the control was very good, with a responsive feel and a great compromise between realism and arcade-like fun. Look for MSR to do big business when it's released Stateside later this year.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
BY: SEGA FOR: DREAMCAST

Next to JSR, Phantasy Star Online was Sega's other pride and joy. Designed to test the viability and market for online console gaming, Sonic Team's PSO wowed audiences with its remote cooperative play and stunning graphics. During Sega's demo, four separate viewpoints were depicted, each showing different perspectives of the same scene. Players communicated through speech bubbles, and the game has been crafted to encourage cooperation and teamwork. Most enticingly, both Japanese and English speech bubbles were shown, giving validity to Sonic Team's claim that the game will be truly global, with players from all over the world able to play together. The practicality of this obviously remains to be seen, but the notion is very intriguing and we can't wait to see how this pans out.





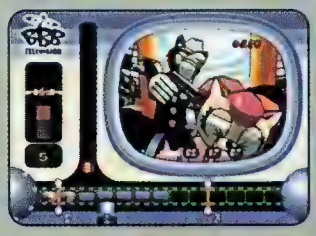


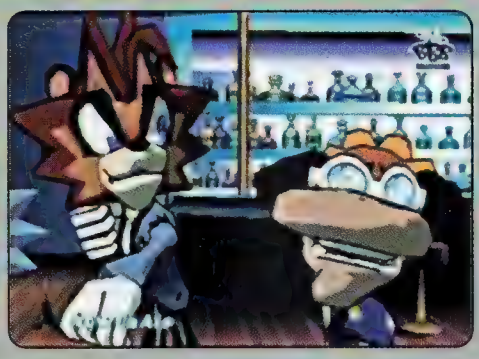
A favorite attraction for the foreign press at the TGS has to be the sight of the dozens of cosplay (short for costume play) showgoers, Japanese gamers with a curious dedication to portraying their favorite video-game characters in the flesh. Usually with a heavy slant towards SNK and Biohazard characters, there was some welcome variety at this year's show, with Dead or Alive 2 and Eternal Arcadia characters making appearances.

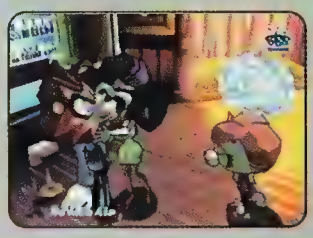
TVDJ

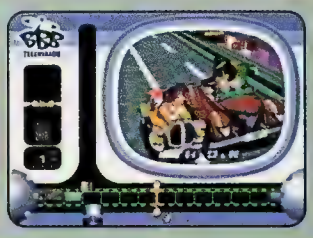
BY: SONY FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

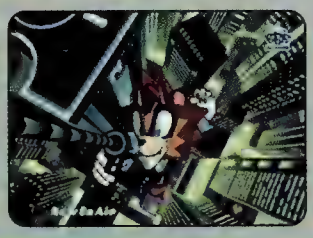
The lone new PS2 title at Sony's booth was TVDJ, a music/timing game that was no substitute for Gran Turismo 2000 or Dark Cloud, both notably absent. Still, TVDJ was a fun and interesting-looking game, with a visual style that is fast becoming popular: polygons with a hand-drawn look. The gameplay allows a little more freedom than games like Beatmania, with players adding different numbers of beats together to achieve required sums for each particular song section. TVDJ's cartoon-inspired look brought a lot to the experience, and is a sort of a new wave Parappa the Rapper.

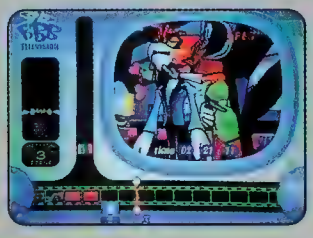












SHIN SANGOKU MUSSOU

BY: KOEI FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

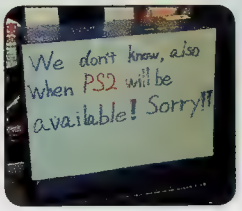
Koei surprised everyone with the first Sangoku Mussou, known as Dynasty Warriors on these shores. The game's solid, weapons-based combat was second only to Soul Edge on PS, as the graphics and gameplay were surprisingly well developed, especially from a company not then known for their 3D prowess. And with the popularity and visual impact of Kessen on PS2, Koei has put themselves in a position where people now have some visual expectations of them, and their Dynasty Warriors sequel doesn't see Koei asleep at the wheel.

A very different game from the original, Shin Sangoku Mussou, as it is currently labeled in Japan, is no longer a one-on-one fighter. Rather, it's a carnage-filled action game with a big cast of selectable characters, and if Koei stays true to form, we should see some historical figures recast as action heroes.

The demo on display allowed players to fight either on horseback or on foot, and the numbers of enemies on screen to slice through was astonishing. Minor slowdown will hopefully be corrected before the game ships.

TOKYO GAME SHOW

During the week leading up to the TGS, we had a chance to visit Tokyo's Akihabara electronics district, where we had hoped to find more PS2s for the office. Amazingly, we were greeted at every turn by "Sold Out" signs, as Sony's machine remained unattainable nearly three weeks after launch. Accessories such as stands and component cables were equally scarce, as were memory cards.



★ARMORED CORE 2
BY: FROM FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

One of the few playable PS2 games at the show was From Software's Armored Core 2, and it delivered pretty much what everyone had expected: gameplay identical to the previous ACs on PlayStation with a big upgrade in visuals. Button mapping and control response were both identical, as was the game's mech construction aspect and combination of mission-based and head-to-head play.

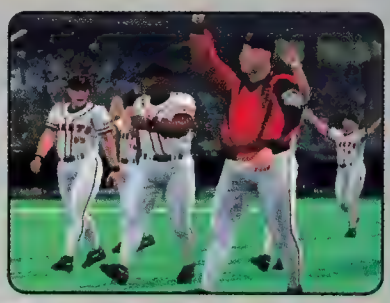
The biggest treat, however, was witnessing Armored Core 2 being played through a PS2 link-up mode using the system's S400 (IEEE1394), or i-Link, port on the front of the machine. Presumably using a standard FireWire connector, the true Armored Core experience came to life, and the demo's impressive two-player arena boded well for this feature.

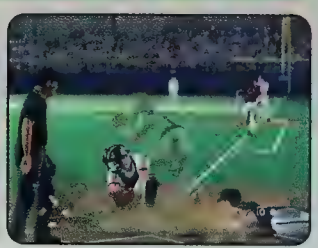
★ALL STAR WRESTLING
BY: SQUARE FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

Square unfortunately did not have playable versions of FFIX, FFX, or The Bouncer, which left everyone a little disappointed, but their All Star Pro Wrestling on PS2 had plenty of Japanese laughing at the game's antics and enjoying themselves nonetheless. With its mixture of classic Japanese wrestlers and crisp PS2-driven imagery, it proved to be popular, and there is the outside possibility that we could see an American-ized version of this game sometime this year.

★SQUARE BASEBALL
BY: SQUARE FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

Though it was supposed to be released during the days surrounding the TGS, Square's Gekikuukan Baseball for PS2 suffered an untimely delay. This is the best-looking game of baseball anyone has ever seen, with eerily realistic motion capture showing a huge range of player animation and behavior.





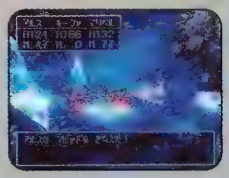
American gamers would be amazed to stroll the streets of Akihabara, where one can have a go on a game like Tekken Tag Tournament or Dead or Alive 2 right on the street in front of the numerous game shops, days before the official release. The culture seems to dictate harmony, and we never saw anyone hogging the chance for free play.

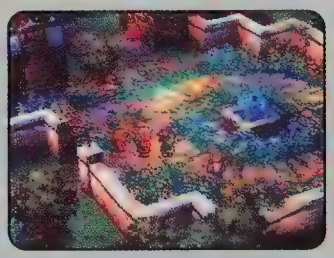
DRAGONQUEST VII

BY: ENIX FOR: PLAYSTATION

Perhaps the most delayed and eagerly anticipated game at the show was Enix' DragonQuest VII for PS. For an idea of how important this game to the Japanese, a giant like Square will re-arrange its release schedule around it, moving FFIX to avoid overlap.

One of the first gaming phenomenons in Japan, the DQ series has never had much of a Stateside showing (where it was known as Dragon Warrior), but DQVII could change that. Polygonal backgrounds combined with the series' stellar storylines should make the game more palatable.





PRIMAL IMAGE

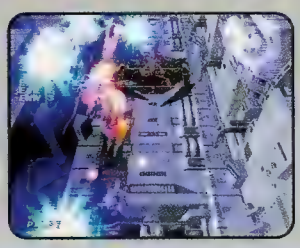
BY: ATLUS FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

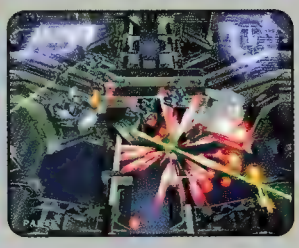
Atlus has been showing good form lately with next generation games like Maken X, and their first PS2 effort certainly looks interesting. I've described Primal Image as Pokémon Snap with breasts, and I still think that's an appropriate description. Acting as a photographer, one gets to take enticing shots of different virtual idols as they dance about on stage. Zooming in on a subject, one is treated to the polygon-pushing capabilities of the PS2, as the women get the system's full attention, and there are enough face types to please just about any male gamer. Could this game spawn the next Herb Ritts?

SILPHEED

BY: GAMEARTS FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

As a shooter fan, the sight of Silpheed running on PS2 was exciting, even if it was shown on tape only, alongside GameArts' other PS2 game, Gun Griffon Blaze. Sticking to the Sega CD original's design brief, Silpheed looked like pure, arcade shooting bliss, still stuck on rails.

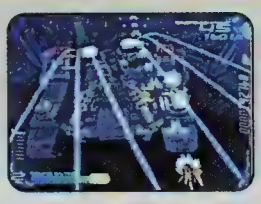




RAY CRISIS

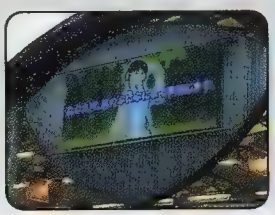
BY: TAITO FOR: PLAYSTATION

One of our favorite PS shooters had a sequel on display at TGS for some hands-on play. Taito's Raystorm sequel Raycrisis looked better in every way than its predecessor, making it one of the PS' finest overhead shooters.



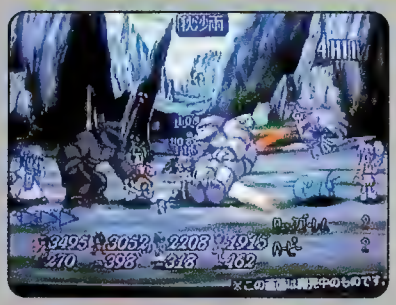
TOKYO GAME SHOW

Giant video-game billboards can be seen everywhere. Right after exiting the Akihabara train station, one is greeted by this massive Code: Veronica ad, while exiting the Shibuya station leads right to this DoA 2 ad, complete with some crack about the game's more, shall we say, gelatinous appeal.



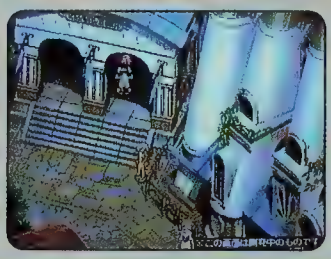
NAMCO'S TALES

BY: FROM FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

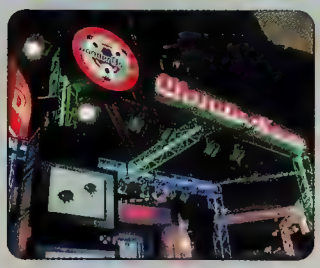


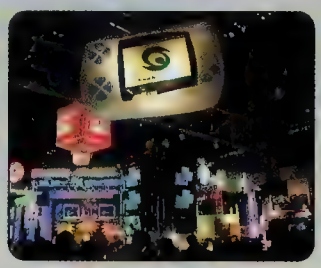
As Namco's highest-profile show offering, Tekken Tag Tournament had already been released at the time of the Spring TGS, we thought we would take a look at their second-highest-profile game, Tales of Eternia. The third entry in the so-called Tales series, Namco's latest makes good use of 2D sprites and subtle polygonal work in its visual design, not straying too far from the aesthetic laid down in Tales of Phantasia.

Jun Toyoda returns from Tales of Destiny to pen this game's story and script, a big part of the game's draw to the Japanese. This time around, there are all new characters, situations, and worlds to explore, along with better AI for the CPU allies. The game also boasts an amazing level of hand-drawn animation in its opening sequence, with production work being handled by Studio IG, one of the top animation houses in Japan.



BAUBLES



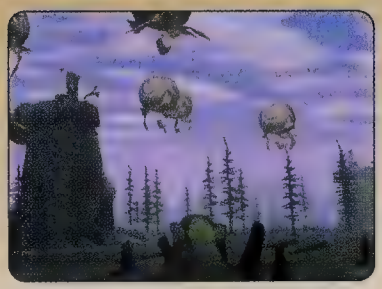


We love looking at the latest little creations from the Japanese, and the TGS 2000 Spring saw the final form of Bandai's programmable robot bug, the WonderBorg. Now in a sleek, production-ready form, the WonderBorg can be programmed by either a PC or a WonderSwan, and players can alter behavior to fight with a friend's 'Borg or act as a simple virtual pet. Bandai also showed more advanced robot pets like the forthcoming BN-1, a $500 cat to take on the much more expensive Sony Aibo. Sega showed off an MP3 player for Dreamcast shaped like a VMU, Atlus had their PocketStation virtual pet software, and the UV Teddy was a Pocket Pikachu-like device designed to monitor UV levels when outdoors.

When in Japan, one must eat at a good ramen (noodle) shop. One of the best can be found in Akihabara in a little hole in the wall that serves the most unbelievable Kyushu-style ramen with savory fatty pork and delectable soup. Remember, it's the soup that animates the noodles. We also got a kick out of this very strange jacket being worn by a woman purchasing her train ticket. And it's always fun to see actresses selling laptop computers.

MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

BY EDD FEAR



Status and power: Oddworld takes a lesson from the real world in order to enhance realism in their next virtual one

With E3 rapidly approaching, Oddworld Inhabitants are in a mad rush to prepare themselves for the craziness that this show entails. But president Lorne Lanning took a few moments from his insanity to give us a few more glimpses into what we can expect from their next title.

Just as Abe's Exoddus was all about the emotional state of Abe's fellow Mudokens, Munch's Oddysee has a unifying concept as well: status. Oddworld doesn't intend to do away with the emotion system they implemented in the previous game, just move focus away from it as an integral gameplay element.

The shift to a status-based model was the outcome of scrutinizing their past efforts and ensuring that they continue the evolution of the games. "One of our goals is removing all menus and things like that, but yet getting the user all the information that they need," Lorne says. "Another one of our goals is bringing everything to life and giving it personality. If something's more powerful, it should look that way. If something has more shielding, it should imply that. That's just basic design." They shared their basic designs of the status/upgrade system for the various species around Oddworld, and you can now see the steps of status Sligs, Glukkons, Mudokens, and Vykkers may attain in order to climb the ladder of success. And you, dear player, must learn how to help or hinder them in order to help Abe and Munch through the game.

Lorne described an early possible stage that would house a low-level Slig at the outset, guarding a voice-locked door that only a Slig may open. This test is simple: possess the Slig, talk into the lock, and advance. But beyond that door,

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there may be five machines that must be operated simultaneously by this possessed character and four other Sligs—but the other four Sligs in the area are of a higher status, and no amount of "C'mere" will get them to do your bidding. Lorne describes it best: "We'll have a billboard—all the power-ups and the vending machines are being promoted to you in this game—that says 'Tired of being dissed by fellow Sligs? You need the Big Whammy! Instant status!' Now, Sligs can go up to ATM machines; all industrial characters have accounts, like Visa cards, right? I can take him up to the ATM as I've got him possessed, and I can go, 'I want to buy the Big Whammy kit!' And, if he's got the moolah in his account, BOOM, the ATM will transform your character into a Big Whammy Slig, but he's still the same guy I'm controlling. And now I go over to these other four guys, and I say, 'Hey.' And they say, 'Heeeyyyy!' [impressed] And I say, 'Follow me!' And they go, 'You bet!'"

Many of you will note that previously, possessed characters were instant targets, but in Munch's Oddysee, Oddworld has seen fit to add the element of infiltration and covert operations. Combining the problems of playing multiple character types, interacting with the other characters around them, and dealing with how the status level of each character relates to the status of the others around them is no easy feat, but must be not only solved but implemented seamlessly in order to create a believable sense of infiltration. Lorne weighs in: "If we get enough RAM, we'll give fifteen different words that all mean 'Hello,' but in a different social ranking. To guys that are below me, my GameSpeak is condescending: 'Hey, idiot.' To guys that are equal to me, my GameSpeak is pretty much equal, socially: 'Hey, how ya doin?'; it's pretty level. To guys that are up above me in my social status, my GameSpeak is subservient: 'Uh, hello, sir.' So as you walk around with any of these possessed characters, if you're hitting your 'greet' button, your character says different things depending on who you're talking to, but it's always in the same flavor; it always has the same meaning, it just has a whole different social connotation to it."

Just the raw concepts of this new game has us itching to try it ("Us, too," says Lorne!), but we'll patiently wait out the release of the PS2 in America for the release. And we'll bring more info as Oddworld gets their development machine into high gear. **GR**

Visit our website to read the full transcription of our meeting with Lorne, and to learn more about the future of Lulu, the dorky-looking pud Glukkon to the right. And we'll bring more info on him, Abe, Munch, and all the rest soon!

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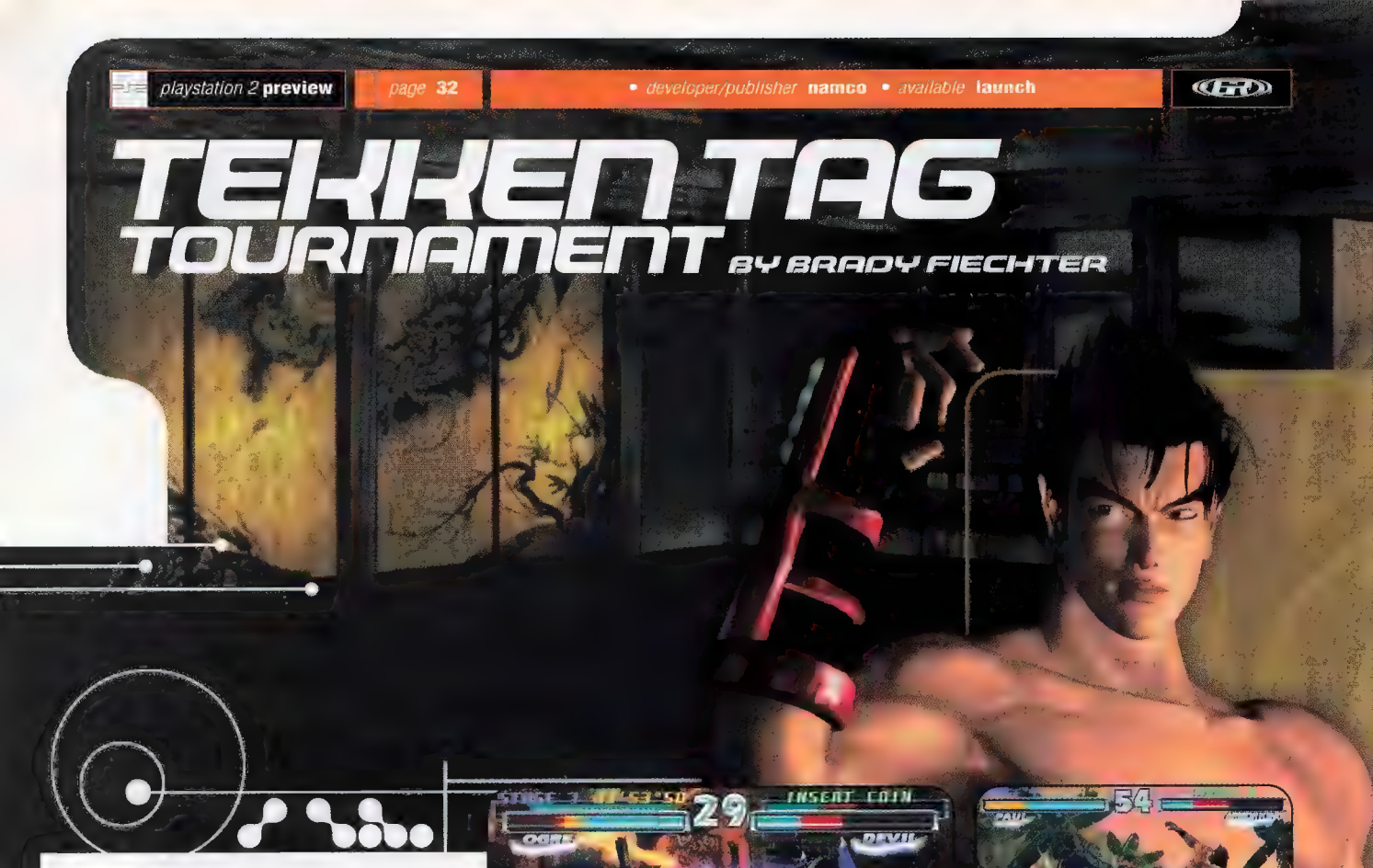
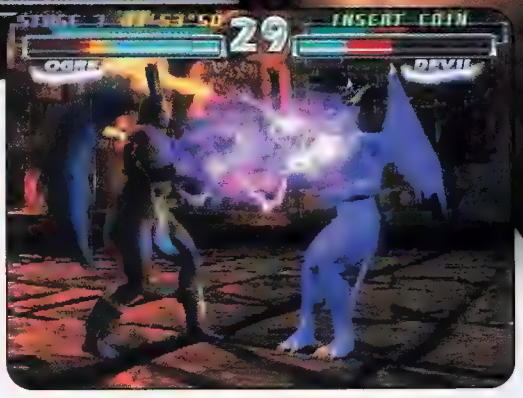
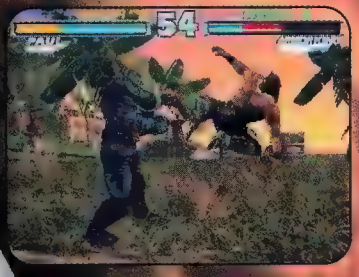
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

BY BRADY FIECHTER







I've heard that the PlayStation 2 is 30 times more powerful than Dreamcast. That it's the video game equivalent of the steam engine. That it's more powerful than the workstations used in George Lucas' Episode One: The Phantom Menace. That it can actually divide by zero.

No wonder the system's launch has received such a hollow response by so many. There was just no way to avoid being consumed by the hype machine, left to take in the games with unrealistic expectations. Just look at Tekken Tag Tournament for the prime example. Arguably the most graphically complex video game ever, it still doesn't escape an incited critical eye, and it's easy to start rattling off exactly where its striking exterior breaks down: the floors are conspicuously hinged to the backgrounds; the characters just don't animate like they should, retaining the same motion-capture routines as Tekken 3; objects show jagged edges. Indeed, these blemishes on an otherwise amazingly detailed visual canvas left me initially disappointed, but the more I play, the greater my appreciation becomes for what Namco has accomplished. This game really must be seen.

Tekken Tag Tournament's greatest visual strength is the unprecedented detail of its character models: fingers move independently; muscles flex and exhibit sinew and points of striation; faces are illuminating in their realism. Just as impressive are the figures busy in the backgrounds; some stages even have movement underneath the arena. No matter where a fight takes place, there is always some breathtaking detail: the torches casting warm glows that consume the temple walls; the sun brilliantly flooding the dojo; the blades of grass moving on the ground on the beach.

Like Ridge Racer V, some will receive Tekken Tag Tournament in frustration, wishing it played like a true sequel. True, Tekken Tag's gameplay is essentially Tekken 3 with the added dimension of tag bouts. No matter. Like Ridge Racer V, I was simply grateful to be playing a game that represented the very best of its genre, taking in a depth of imagery I had never seen before in a video game. GR

Tekken Tag Tournament is so impressive, we just had to talk to the director who brought it all together, Masahiro Kimoto. Here's what he had to say:

Gamers' Republic: When we were in Japan for Tokyo Game Show, we were shocked at just how many people lined up to buy Tekken Tag Tournament. Are you surprised at how huge the Tekken series has become?
Masahiro Kimoto: We are very much grateful to users. However, we worked hard during its development in the hope of receiving [such a great] reaction from users. So we might have fallen down with shock if it hadn't been selling well.

GR: What do you think of PlayStation 2? Are you satisfied with the results you got for Tekken Tag?
MK: We game designers are never satisfied with hardware systems in terms of performance, no matter how good we are. All game designers in the world surely answer the same: we always want more!

GR: Is the system difficult to work with?
MK: I can't say it's easy to work with because the hardware and the development environment were all new to us, but I don't think it's difficult.

GR: Is there a problem with anti-aliasing on PS2? Tekken and the other games we've seen are showing problems with jagged edges.
MK: Although I don't know what impression you had from the product, edges must be sharper as a result of the improvement in resolution that come from the PS2's power. I personally don't like to use anti-aliasing too much, which can cause images to look blurred.

GR: Tekken's popularity is as strong as ever. Do you feel the next Tekken should undergo any major changes to the gameplay, perhaps adding more 3D elements to the fighting?
MK: The high performance capability of PS2 may realize many new things that were impossible in PS Tekken games. Naturally, in such a case I expect to see some major changes in future Tekken games.

GR: What is the one area you feel separates Tekken from the other fighters on the market?
MK: Characters' movements are not based strictly on reality of genuine martial arts but have been modified for the sake of gameplay. They may be exaggerated to extremes at times, but this is what makes the player excited. That's what makes Tekken different from other fighters.

GR: As amazing as Soul Calibur is on Dreamcast, we'd love to see a Tekken on Sega's system. Would you ever consider programming a Tekken game for Sega?
MK: We have no such plan at this point, though it might be necessary for the game to be adapted for multi-platforms for more players to enjoy the Tekken universe.

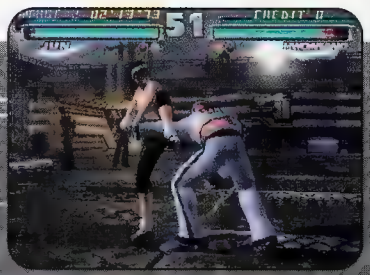
GR: The detail in the character models is extraordinary. Did you feel you'd get such great results when you started out?
MK: At the start of the development we expected to get them, and took considerable time for their creation as well.

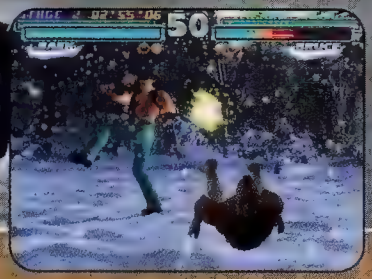
GR: What changes have you made from the arcade version of Tekken Tag?
MK: As for basic gameplay, we have made no change. We aimed to achieve full and perfect conversion. Otherwise, as you see, graphics and sound have been improved, and game modes and some functions added.

GR: You completed the game pretty quickly, right?
MK: We completed the game by no means quickly, but had nearly a year for [its development]. I think that's long, if anything, for the development of a game taken from the arcades.

GR: Did you feel rushed? I'm sure Sony wanted the game out right away, considering how big and important the Tekken name is.
MK: We have been rushed ever since SCE announced PS2. We hoped to release the game as soon as possible, for it was exhibited at the same time as the release of PS2. Although we missed this deadline, we felt that the quality of our product had to come first.

GR: What kind of surprises can we expect from the Tekken series in the future?
MK: The great thing about this process is that sometimes great things happen during development that surprise even us. We just enjoy creating games and can't ourselves predict how games will change in the future. However, I do believe that our games will continue to provide the type of gameplay that players want most. And what will be there further ahead is a secret.





DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S

BY MIKE HOBBS

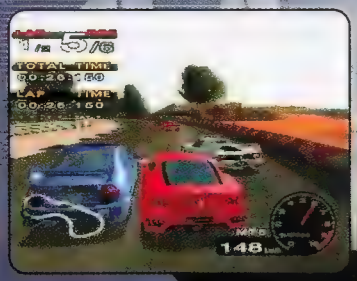
Gran Turismo 2000 is a ways off yet, but Polyphony Digital needn't worry about Square's Driving Emotion Type-S stealing any pre-release thunder away from their game. Far less ambitious and probably much more frustrating, Square's virgin PS2 effort is truly a mixed bag.

The most curious thing about Type-S is just how difficult the game is to control initially, and the first hour or so of play is fraught with frustration as one struggles to keep the cars pointed in the right direction. There is simply no such thing as throwing a car into a corner here. Instead, Type-S requires a ridiculously gentle touch, and one must caress and guide the cars around the courses with precision and a good deal of restraint. Given some time the control can be, if not mastered, then at least understood and adapted to, and once this occurs, victories begin to pile up, granting access to more cars and more circuits. However, the game never comes anywhere near the effortless joy of Ridge Racer V, having to make do with a sort of abstracted driving pleasure that seems to have little to do with real-world physics or racing-game convention.

And Type-S really needs Ridge Racer's type of visceral addiction, because there simply isn't enough to the structure of the game to keep one interested, with only an arcade race, time attack, and a two-player versus mode. And while there are some fantastic licensed cars to open up, including Ferraris and BMWs, two makes glaringly absent from Gran Turismo, there are none of the myriad race contests that help give GT its longevity.

But this is a PS2 game, and at least one cannot complain too much about the graphics. Though it has far less impact than Ridge Racer V, Type-S sometimes looks very good, especially on courses like the Urban Highway, as buildings and signage glow with an impressive, milky sort of luminosity. Pop-up is nonexistent, and in the in-car view, one is treated to working gauges and even a reflection of the dashboard cast on the inside of the windshield. However, car models are nothing special at all, and slow-down and glitching overlays in replay mode give the game a rushed feeling. To make matters worse, the load time before each race is interminable.

As I said, a mixed bag, though I won't go so far as to call Driving Emotion Type-S a bad game; it's more that its pleasures are esoteric and not immediately apparent. But without a doubt, the game will be forgotten the instant Gran Turismo 2000 is released. Let's hope some dynamic changes are made to a possible American version, still under consideration. GR

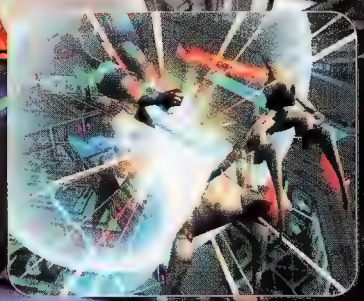


ZONE OF THE ENDERS

BY BRADY FIETCHER

When Hideo Kojima, the creator of the extraordinary Metal Gear series, announces he is working on a new game and his production studio teases us with screenshots like what you see on this page, how can we not get excited? Not even 20 percent into its production cycle, Zone of the Enders has only been seen in video form, but the robot designs and explosions are already exhibiting astonishing detail and structure. "I am creating something that I could not achieve in MGS in this game," says Yoji Shinkawa, who imagined the extraordinary mechanical designs for Metal Gear Solid.

On the surface, the game looks to be a standard action/fighter, but producer Kojima would have us believe differently: "Z.O.E. is not a usual robot action game. Although the game is for someone who loves robots, animation and sci-fi, it will be somewhat similar to Zelda, in which players feel or experience the world within by becoming the main character, a pilot of a giant robot."



DEAD OR ALIVE 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER

The beauty of Tecmo's amazing Dead or Alive 2 is that the fighting is liberated from the typically rigid, restricting arenas that trap most 3D brawlers into a feeling of being on a plane separated from the landscape surrounding it. Because you have the freedom to move around your opponent, forcing him into walls, over ledges and through barriers onto the ground far below, the game's 3D world becomes fully enveloping. No fighting game contains this convincing level of virtual realism.

Borrowing its gameplay style from the Virtua Fighter archetype, Dead or Alive 2 moves at a dizzying pace, supporting its rapid-fire three-button combo system with a powerful, graceful ballet of grabs, punches and kicks. Easy to pick up but difficult to master, the game most greatly shows its wealth of intricacies when you begin to discover the importance of the reversal. Instead of simply dropping into a metronomic exchange of block and attack, you can react to an offensive by using the Free button, which turns an opponent's attack right back around.

A few quick counterattacks can be devastating, but only when you've linked correct timing with an awareness of whether to counter high, medium or low can a true mastery be reached; finding that perfect rhythm will send any novice running away scared.

In what seems to be the next big thing in fighting games, a tag battle mode is also here, allowing you to team up for team combos, some of which are brutally effective when delivered by the right combination of fighters. Some teams bring exclusive moves to the table, like the father-daughter pairing of Bass and Tina, and learning the huge range of combo possibilities while properly managing the pace and recovery period of your fighters becomes yet another aspect of Dead or Alive 2 that will keep you deeply involved.

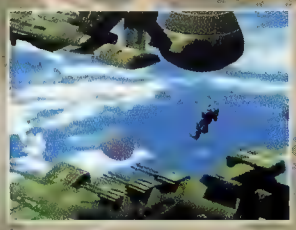
Originally designed on Sega's Naomi arcade hardware, Dead or Alive 2 was transplanted from Dreamcast code to

▸ CONTINUED ON PAGE 124

IT'S A WORLD OF INTENSE ACCURACY, RICH GRAPHICS AND UNBELIEVABLE DETAILS. NOW GET OUT THERE AND DESTROY IT.

GUNDAM SIDE STORY 0079

It's Gundam Side Story 0079, Rise from the Ashes with 3D battle simulation, movie-quality sound track and Gundam – quality mass destruction. Electronic Gaming Monthly™ called it, "... some of the richest graphics yet on Dreamcast. Each of the mechs are cut with so much detail, they look like FMV at a glance." And a glance is all the insidious Zaku forces will get, before your jump jet action and zoom-in weapon features blow them into another dimension.



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T Teen — Animated Violence

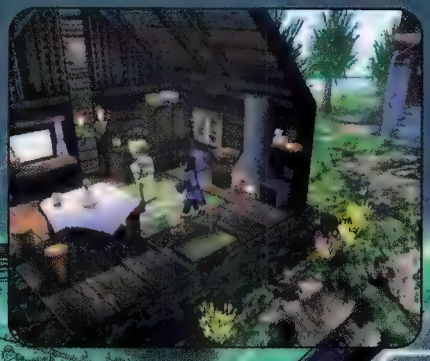
BANDAI®

ETERNAL ARCADIA

BY MIKE HOBBS

After having to make do with good but admittedly small-scale RPGs like Time Stalkers and Evolution, Dreamcast owners will get their first taste of a true RPG in Eternal Arcadia, and by all accounts, the wait will have been well worth it. The game's amazing look, both in its environments and its fantastically emotive characters, coupled with innovations in combat and world navigation will see to that. And Eternal Arcadia should prove to be an important part of Sega's PS2 counterattack this September, as we can be almost certain that there will be no RPG this fully developed available for the PS2 for some time, for the same reason that a game like Eternal Arcadia could not have launched with the Dreamcast; it's simply too ambitious.

This look at Eternal Arcadia is based on a surprisingly generous demo handed out at this year's Tokyo Game Show Spring. Split up into three playable components, there is little doubt as to the extreme potential of this game, brought to us by members of the Phantasy Star series development staff. Highlighting combat, airship travel, and town realization, this trial version proves that games developed specifically and ambitiously for Dreamcast lose little face in the presence of the PS2. Eternal Arcadia is going to be truly special. GR

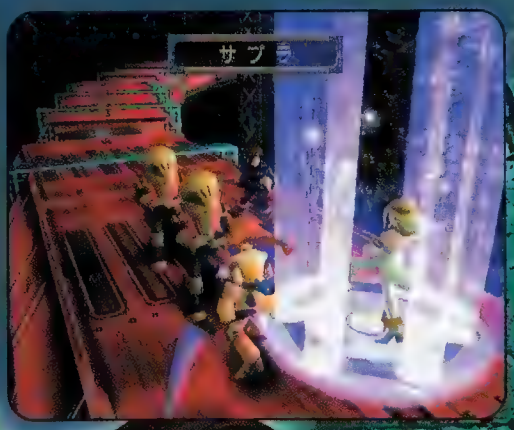


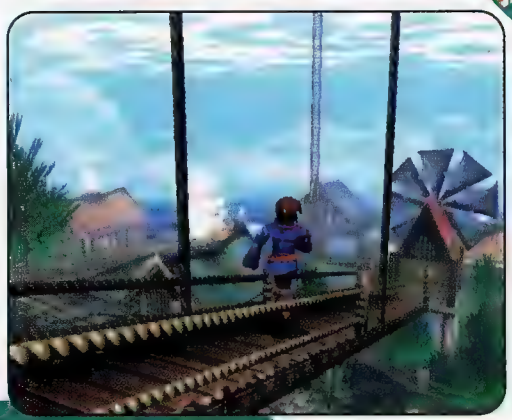
Let's go by Airship

Leaving the traditional RPG overworld travel behind, Eternal Arcadia's characters move about the land in wind-powered airships, lending a wonderful sense of style and kinematics to typically droll world navigation and exploration. Moving about on all axes, one can search high and low, far and wide in Eternal Arcadia's airships. But this is no free ride, for as in most overworld movement, battles can occur at anytime, and monsters can take to the deck of your ship for a bit of action.

Combat System

Like any RPG worth its salt, Eternal Arcadia features a clever and well-developed combat system that is both easy to learn and sophisticated. Typically fighting in a party of three led by the game's hero, Vice, there is the usual mixture of standard attacks, healing, item usage, and offensive magic use. However, one can defer attacking or defending in favor of performing a charge move, which helps to fill up a meter (which also rises slowly through normal combat activity), allowing for powerful special attacks. This meter also helps to power certain magical spells, and deciding when to forego a turn in favor of charging this meter is a big part of combat, at least in this demo. Also, characters can alter the properties of the their weapons in real time, greatly affecting the damage incurred to an enemy.





In Town

One of the most impressive bits in this Eternal Arcadia demo is the level of graphics present in town. Played from a comfortable third-person perspective, the size of the visible world is incredible while still being fully detailed and marvelously textured. There is one part in the demo town where Vice climbs this impossibly tall ladder up to an overhead island, and the view from above is stunning, as the entire lower level environment is visible. But perhaps the most amazing element of being in town is the way the game handles walking into buildings. Instead of going to a black screen and loading in a new mini-environment, Eternal Arcadia pauses for a moment as the front of the structure simply dissolves away, allowing you to see and move around inside. Once one leaves or moves on to another part of the structure, the departed area fills back in. This is an incredibly elegant solution that only looks good, but keeps the game moving along nicely.

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MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

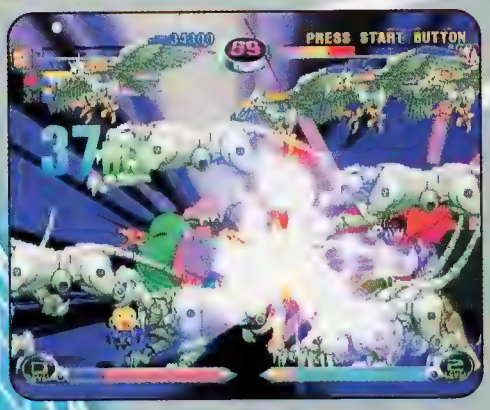
Capcom proves they're still the masters of fighting as they bring complete madness back to Dreamcast with 56 characters, gorgeous graphics and chaotic 3-on-3 combat

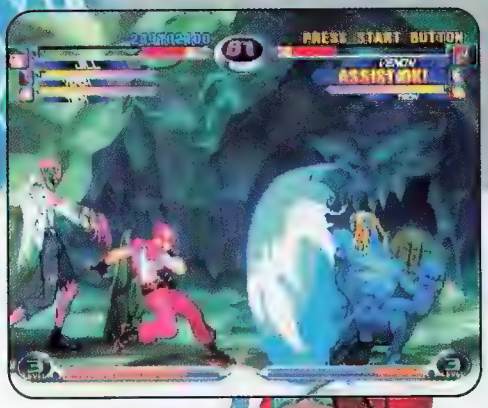
My God, somebody stop the insanity! Or better yet, don't. Marvel vs. Capcom 2 is absolute 2D madness and I could not be happier. Believe me, after playing MvC 2 you won't want to stop until you pass out with Dreamcast controller in hand, and your head will still be filled with bizarre and wild images of Tron's Kobun robots holding down Morrigan, of Thanos' stone walls of vengeance closing in on an unfortunate Guile, of strange green cactus creatures, of 100-hit projectile combos, and of aerial rave craziness that send classic comic-book heroes into the stratosphere and back down to earth. There are few fighting games as wild as Marvel vs. Capcom 2: New Age of Heroes and few fighting games as fun.

Capcom didn't hold anything back in this phenomenal sequel. Almost everything has been enhanced for maximum chaos. How many other games have you regularly scoring well into the billions? The two-character-plus-one-helper system from the original Marvel vs. Capcom has been scrapped in favor of three fully playable characters per team. Yep, that means triple-team mega combos and chains of projectiles that will decimate an opponent like there's no tomorrow. It also gives you multiple assists, and you can select for each character how the assist will function.

The character selection is absolutely staggering. A mind-blowing 56 characters are included in total, with 24 immediately selectable, including favorite standbys like Ryu, Cyclops, Spiderman and Zangief; characters never before seen in a fighter like Cable, Tron Bonne, Jill Valentine (feel Tyrant unleashed!), Ruby Heart, and Son Son; and some lesser-seen combatants like Psylocke and Anarakis. The other characters are unlockable by trading in your score points and include the entire cast of X-Men: Children of the Atom, Marvel Super Heroes, every previous Vs. title and more, from M.Bison to Sentinel to Felicia to Juggernaut.

The game takes beautiful advantage of the Dreamcast's graphical abilities with gorgeously detailed backgrounds that combine 2D and 3D elements. From still shots, the backgrounds look hand-drawn, but once the action



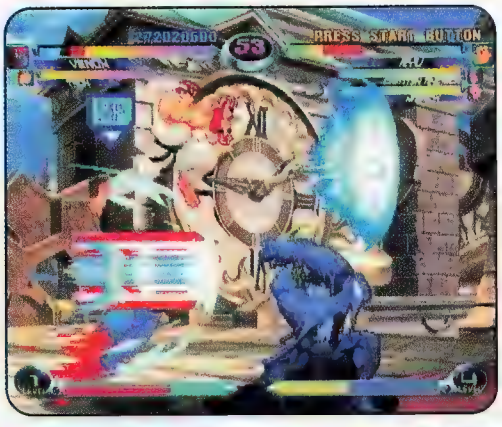


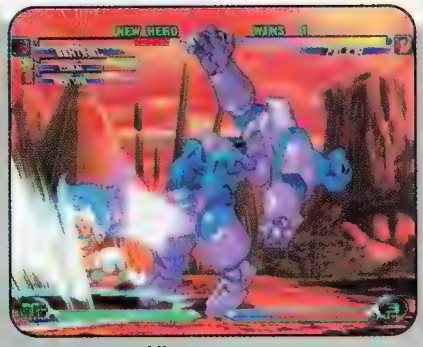
begins and you see the elements in flawless fluid motion, you'll be sucked into the warped reality of a 3D work of art. Everything here is incredibly smooth with lovely shading, lifelike colors and tons of details like waving flags, spinning cogs on a clock tower, and birds flying through a sky of clouds. Some backgrounds rely less on 3D and more on incredibly sharp 2D filled with parallax and a few polygon objects, but either way, it's a wonder to behold.

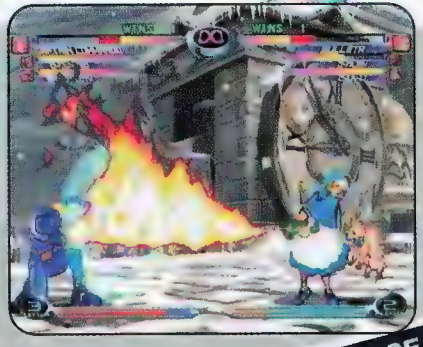
Capcom also had the Dreamcast in mind when they designed Marvel vs. Capcom 2. The new four-button fighting system works great on the Dreamcast pad, and it makes playing the game much easier and more fun than it would be to pull off combos with the L and R triggers. Instead of medium-strength attacks, a double tap on the weak buttons will create an instant chain attack, and mid-level specials can be done with two buttons together. Other changes to gameplay include the ability to pull off a "snapback" attack that temporarily knocks an opposing team member out of play, and delayed super combos that let you chain attacks for massive devastation.

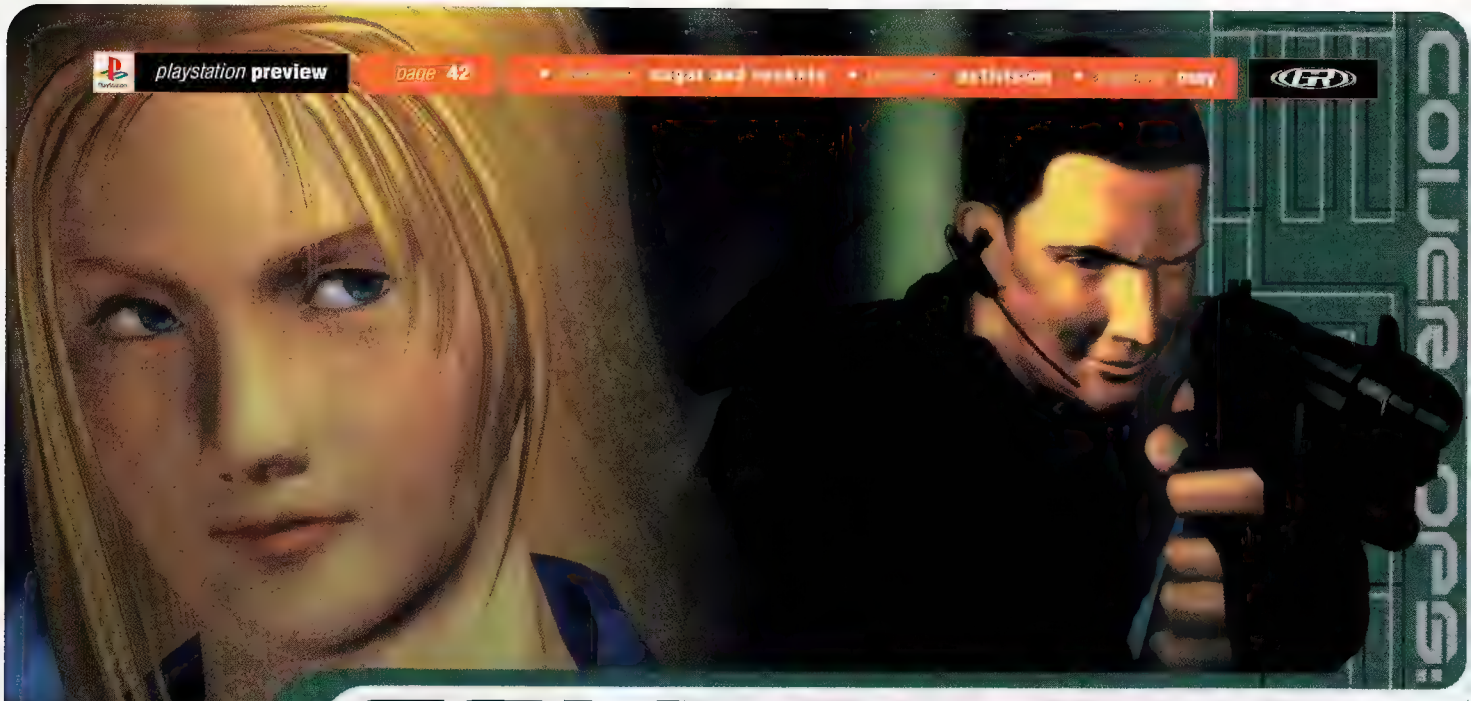
On the downside, the slightly pixilated characters contrast with the clean backgrounds, but it's not a big problem. Considering all the onscreen mayhem, you'll probably have little time to nitpick the visuals. The music is curious, too—extremely nice high-quality sound filled with vocals, but with a strange jazz composition that often seems out of place. Sound effects are the usual top-notch stuff, of course.

Capcom fans don't need to be told; they already know that Marvel vs. Capcom 2 is 2D fighting bliss. For those who haven't fallen under the spell of Capcom's manic action, well, this just might change their minds. The only thing more maddening than the game's pure fighting fun might be the wait for this game to come to the U.S. GR









COVERT OPS: NUCLEAR DAWN

BY BRADY FIECHTER

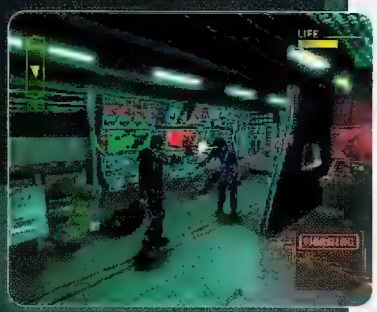
Pretend you are Steven Segal in Under Siege 2: Dark Territory. You're not a cook, but you do get to shoot terrorists

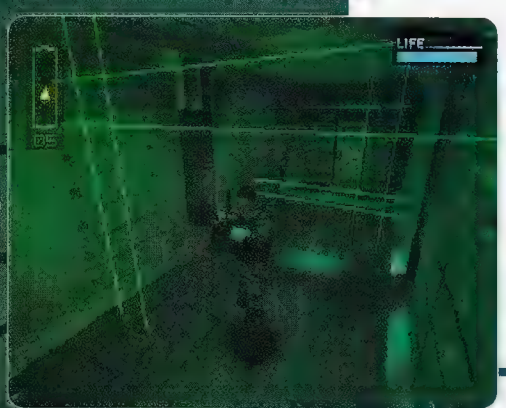
Near the end of Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn, elite NATO rescue-team member Jack Morton is forced to disarm a set of nuclear warheads. In a frantic conversation with headquarters, Morton is told that a worst-case scenario would be to lead the train he is on into a tunnel so that the blast can be contained. Must be a pretty thick tunnel.

No wait—there's a better explanation. This is a video game, which means the rules of good story telling usually don't apply. But as a faithful inhabitant of Club Survival Horror, other rules do. Rule number one: bad voice acting. Rule number two: important documentation and written memos with pass codes are often left in plain sight. Rule number three: invaluable tools and key cards are often found lying on the floor or in the pocket of a dead person. Rule number four: people really enjoy leaving cryptic messages and hiding things in strange places.

What really separates Covert Ops from the pack is its uniquely interesting setting, a high-speed government train speeding through the countryside of Europe. The train is carrying an ambassador and his family who have been taken hostage by a terrorist cell called the "Knights of the Apocalypse," whose ultimate goal is to acquire a top-secret device hidden on board. Of course, your goal is to ensure that everyone goes home happy except for the terrorists, which means there will be a lot of death from high-powered, military-level weapons, and a lot of simple puzzle solving.

Covert Ops gets off to a strong start, propelled by an extremely impressive look and involving gameplay, but it loses its footing the more you have to run back and forth through the same set of train cars. This becomes especially fatiguing when the overly easy, somewhat perfunctory enemy confrontations fail to pick up the slack. But despite these and a few other minor flaws, Covert Ops, developed by the obviously talented team that brought us Jumping Flash III, does more than enough right. GR





It's addictive. It's frenetic. It's a total blast! It's Mr. Driller, the pick-up-and-play puzzle game that's a hole lot of fun. Strap on your hard hat, fire up your drill and tunnel into action. Mr. Driller takes seconds to learn, yet provides years of challenge and enjoyment. Be prepared: once you start drillin' there is no chillin'!

Mr. Driller™

namco Sega Dreamcast. GAME BOY COLOR EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB PlayStation

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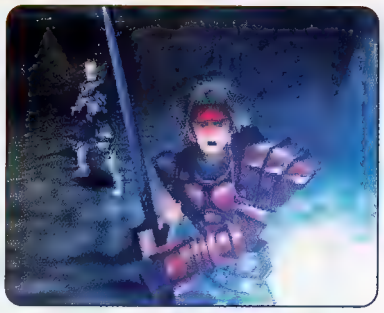
LEGEND OF DRAGOON

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



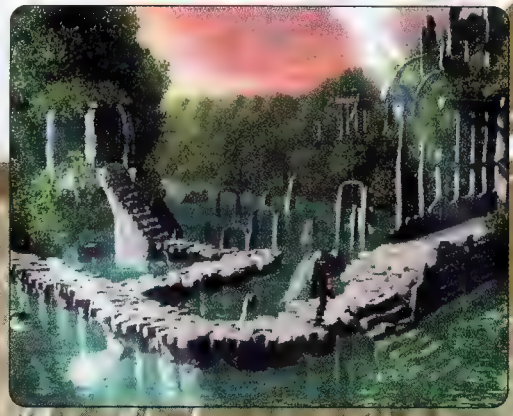
Years in the making, spanning four CDs, labored on by over 100, Legend of Dragoon is the next big epic for PlayStation

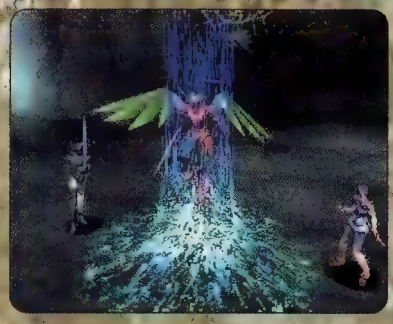
It's hard to be an RPG fan and not be excited about the Legend of Dragoon. Sony has poured a lot of love and attention into the making of their latest RPG. Much like Hollywood summer blockbusters, Legend of Dragoon is high on visual appeal and production values. But unlike your average big-budget flick, the game has a lot of depth and substance to back up its looks. This translates into another epic RPG for the PlayStation that follows squarely in the footsteps of the Final Fantasy series.

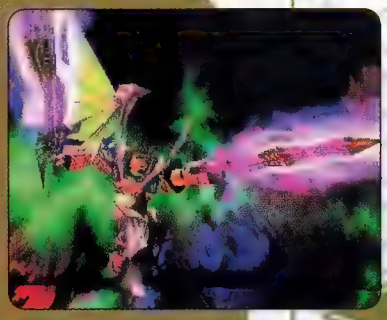
Dragoon's legend begins when the main character, Dart, returns to his hometown after a long journey. Finding the village in ruins and his not-quite girlfriend Shana kidnapped, Dart embarks on a quest to rescue her and gets caught up in a story of love, revenge and civil war, combined with a tale of ancient legends and mythical conflicts between humans and oppressive monsters called Winglies. On his adventure, Dart teams up with eight other characters and becomes blessed with dragoon powers that let him combine his spirit with that of a dragon to obtain new special abilities.

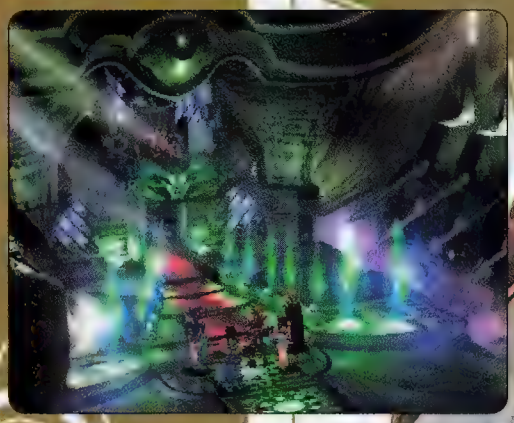
Playing Legend of Dragoon without comparing it to the PlayStation Final Fantasy games is pretty close to impossible. Visually, it's difficult to tell that the game is not part of Square's number-one franchise, as Legend of Dragoon combines detailed polygon characters with a beautifully detailed prerendered world. More than 650 finely crafted, high-detail scenes make up the bulk of Dragoon, each one bursting with intricate details and animation effects like billowing smoke and rays of light. The shimmering reflections the water casts along the side of a canal are absolutely gorgeous: it's graphical splendor as good as anything yet seen on more advanced systems.

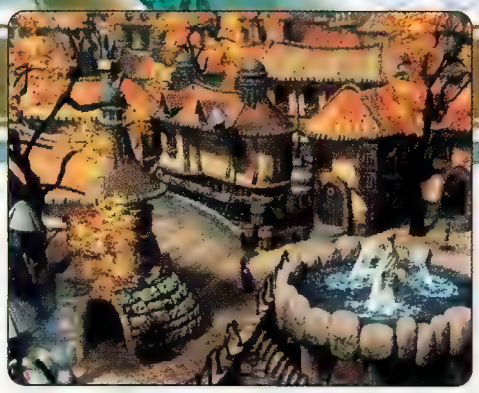
Fighting is done in full polygonal 3D glory. Like in Final Fantasy, the camera pans and zooms around the battlefield before combat begins, and the presentation of the turn-based combat is strikingly similar, right down to the victory poses where one character spins his weapon over







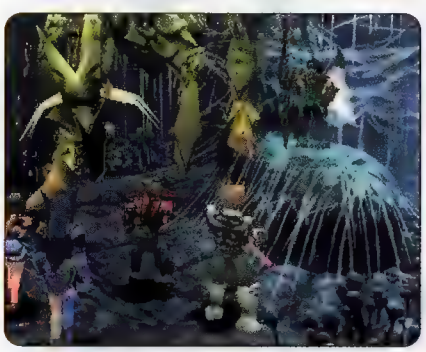


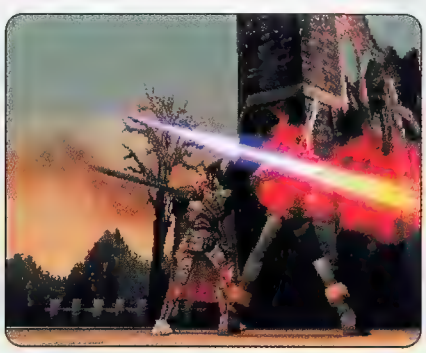


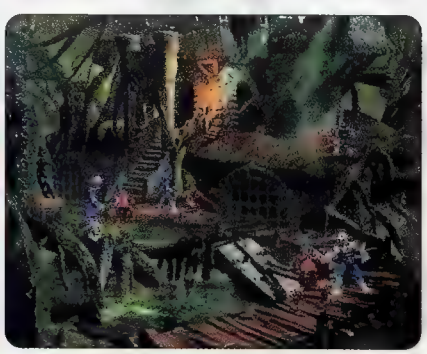
his head. But Dragoon features a wealth of combat innovations to keep it interesting and unique, such as the Additional attack system. When characters attack, a blue box spirals in on the enemy. A perfectly timed button press results in a second attack, and in some cases can be chained repeatedly for up to eight hits. It can be tricky to master the timing on additional attacks, but once you've put in a bit of practice, it makes combat much more exciting than in the typical run-of-the-mill RPG. Attack items also gain extra power (and wild visuals) from manic button tapping.

Things get even more intriguing once the characters have gained their dragoon powers. As characters attack, they gather spirit points, and when enough have been collected, the character can morph into dragoon form amid spectacular graphic effects. Dragoon form only lasts a few rounds but it lets players perform a physical combination attack or use character-specific elemental dragoon magic. Traditional magic doesn't exist in Legend of Dragoon, so being in dragoon form is the only way to unleash spells.

Despite all its pluses, Dragoon has a couple flaws at this point. The game's overworld map can't be explored; you can only travel from point A to B, giving the game a more linear feel than most RPGs. Also, inventories are limited to only 32 items (not counting equipment), which is annoying. But the biggest problem is the game's writing. Characters are fairly one-dimensional and the dialogue is questionable at best. Some pretty heavy stuff happens on the first two discs of the adventure, but the characters are so dull it's hard to care. Fortunately, Sony has time left to draft new text. If they do the game's story justice, Legend of Dragoon should be as legendary as its name implies. **GR**

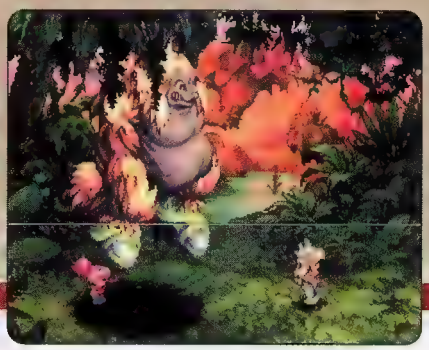






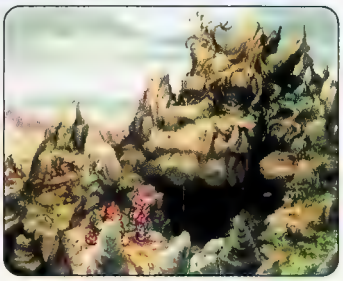
LEGEND OF MANA

BY J.R. MAUGER



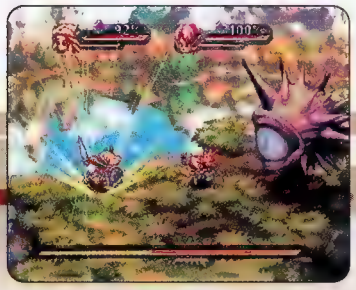
What immediately pops out about Legend of Mana are the astoundingly detailed hand-drawn environments. It almost feels like you're playing a game inside a painting. It is such a visual treat that each time you start the game up, you know your jaw will once again drop at whatever breathtaking new scenery you're about to unlock. Square really knows how to take care of its customers.

Legend of Mana isn't visually comparable to its American predecessor, Secret of Mana on the Super NES, because while the latter's graphics were typically 16-bit cartoony, the former has taken a giant step in the artistic direction. That aspect aside, gameplay remains fairly faithful to the SNES version. You get to choose one of two cute-looking characters, one male and one female, who you control throughout the game. Unlike Secret, you don't have the option of playing with two other human players. Now you just control the one, and a friend can play the second character, who will change depending on the quest you're on. There is also a computer-controlled NPC who you can have tag along, but this is usually just a pet monster who doesn't do much for you.



The way the game unfolds is unique, featuring the "Land Make" system. In Legend, there is no preset world to explore. Instead, you get Artifacts in your travels, which when used will create new Lands. Each Land is a separate entity; there are no roads connecting them. Quests will occasionally cross over from one to another, but generally, missions are contained within the Land you receive them. You place the Lands on the map yourself, so you essentially create your own world. This is definitely a departure from typical RPG style, but is perfect for breaking monotony, as each Land has a look quite distinguishable from the next.

Another appreciated innovation is the way that quests are handled.

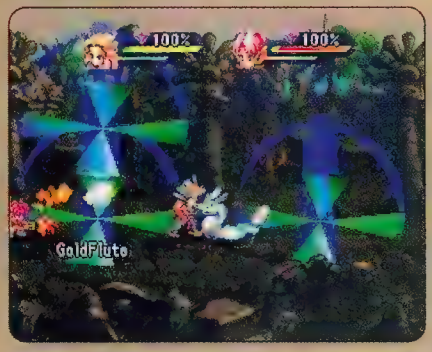


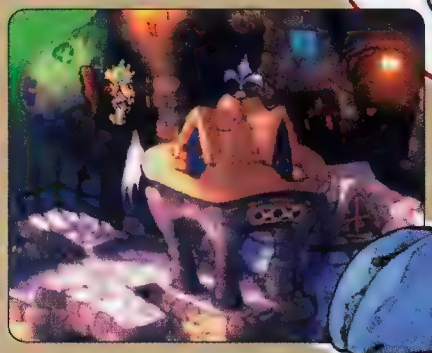
When you receive one, the name of the quest appears on the screen, and is recorded in your Diary. Upon completion, you get a screen saying "The End," so you know it is over. Not only does this make it seem like you're accomplishing more, but it also helps keep track of what you have going on and still have left to do. In your character's home, there is an adorable little cactus you tell about your travels, and it runs over to the wall and writes them down, so you have a written recap of all your adventures.

If you know Square, you know they like to think big. This is certainly the case with Legend, as all the bosses are about five times your character's size. There are also other really large creatures such as a big rock man like the one from *The Neverending Story*, and a big talking tree not unlike the kind you can find at a McDonald's play area. Also big is the number of things you can "collect" on your journey to save the Mana Tree. The game keeps track of all sorts of things, like the characters you talk to, the items you find, and the abilities you develop, recording them in books in your personal library with detailed descriptions and beautifully drawn pictures.

In Legend, as in Secret, you are constantly upgrading your character, be it with magic spells, leveled-up weapons, or new abilities. Let's say you have the Jump skill and the High Jump skill equipped. If you fight enough battles, you learn the Double Jump ability, which you can use for powerful combo moves. These abilities can also give you special magic attacks, and all of these skills can be assigned to any buttons, creating a veritable arsenal of attacks.

Featuring an array of stunning artistry and an orchestral soundtrack on par with Square's greatest, this game is sure to continue the company's fine pedigree of RPGs. **GR**

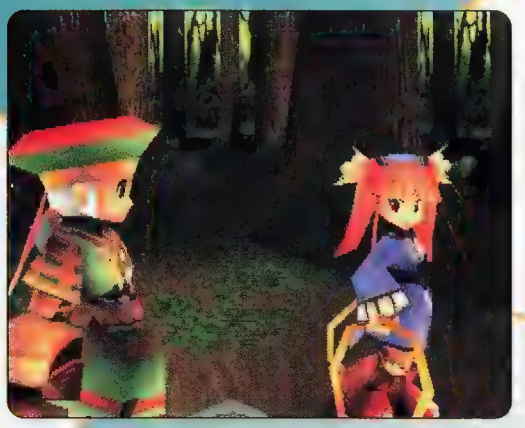




THREADS OF FATE

BY J.R. HAUGEN

With this wonderfully colorful adventure, Square continue their tradition of PS excellence

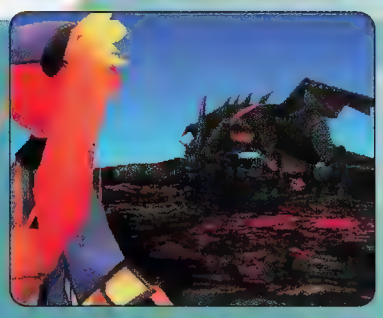


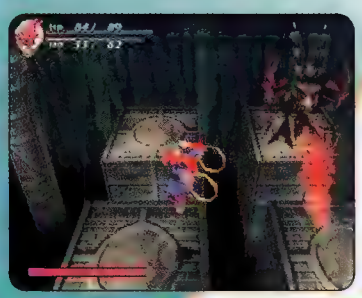
All right, here's a vote. Which is a better name for this game: Dewprism, or Threads of Fate? I have to go with the first, the original Japanese title, but apparently Square thought the second one was more appropriate. Whatever the title, this game is a lot of fun. You get to play as either the mysterious boy Rue, or the pig-tailed girl Mint. She is an especially amusing character who insults just about everyone, always wants her way, and whose ultimate goal is actually world domination. The kids follow different plots, or threads of fate, if you will, which intertwine at various points, but the overriding story is the search by several people for a long-lost relic.

The action is contained mostly to 2D planes, occasionally branching deeper into the scenery as the level dictates, but never truly attains 3D, which is good considering how problematic that can be. You can obtain eight types of magic (the typical fire, water, lightning, wind assortment), each of which has eight different spells, all manipulated with ease. Your weapons don't change, with Mint wielding magic rings, and Rue swinging a big cudgel from start to finish. Leveling up is nonexistent, but your maximum hit points go up the more you get hit, and your total magic points go up the more you use your spells. Money doesn't spew forth from enemies' corpses either, but instead the game tallies the monsters you've killed, and you sell these "bodies" for money.

Spyro the Dragon is the game that comes to mind when describing the look of Threads of Fate, as all the textures are clean, bright, and colorful. The character designs are also somewhat simple and lighthearted, making the game seem like it's aimed at children. Play it, though, and you'll see this isn't the case. The cut scene animations also bring a lot of humor to the game, adding to the fun.

The game formerly known as Dewprism isn't quite shaping up to be the epic we've come to expect from Square but a wondrous adventure well worth experiencing nevertheless. **GR**





TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

BY TOM STRATTON

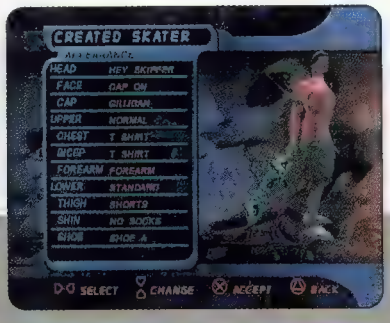
Bottom line: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 is everything it should be. Both Neversoft and the circle of skaters involved in this game and the original have come up with so many new features, it makes me wonder what more a third installment could offer.

The most innovative play mechanic is the manual, a basic trick where the skater balances on the front or rear trucks while rolling along. In the game, it serves as a bridge between rails or curbs so that you can continue your combo. Girls and boys, this alone is the single best addition Pro Skater could have included. The idea is simple. Start a good multiple grind or rail slide then drop out of the grind and tap up/down or down/up. This will result in a manual. Now a meter will pop onscreen showing your balance. You need to finesse the controller to keep relative balance until you reach another hot spot to continue your grind combo. Genius, pure genius!

All ten skaters have returned, dolled up in new apparel, and two new faces are promised to make the list as well. What makes their return more special is that specific moves are now assigned to each of them. In the original Pro Skater, vert skaters and street skaters shared the majority of moves, so no matter whom you chose to play as, pressing up on the controller and tapping the Circle button would always result in a Rocket Air. Now, each skater will perform a different trick. This opens the replay factor tremendously, driving the player to truly learn new skate styles and maneuvers.

Adding to the variety, players can even edit their skater, reassign moves, alter their appearance, create skate parks, even manipulate and reconfigure existing levels, which are now closely modeled after real locations. Only two locations were available in the version left by Activision—Marseilles, France and Skate Street, Ventura. I have yet to visit France, so I can't comment on the authenticity of the reproduction, but I have been to Skate Street and it looks just like the real park, mural and all.

This, of course, has translated into picking out the exact line I use when skating there. Only now, while I play, I can take advantage of moves I am either too scared or too smart to try. When the game drops this fall, many days at a special spot in North Hollywood will house endless tournaments much like the original did. GR



TUROK 3

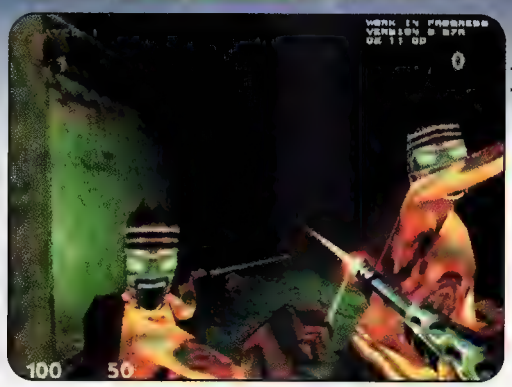
BY MICHAEL PUCCINI

In a corner of Dave Dienstbier's office at Acclaim Studios Austin sit two medium-sized fish tanks, each home to his exotic reptiles. One tank houses two absolutely beautiful, elegant, yellow-and-blue-colored, poison dart frogs appropriately named Frog 1 and Frog 2. Resting in the back corner of the other tank, near a huge rock, is a majestic, green, foot-long lizard - a prehensile-tailed skink, named Greedo del Skinko. And as I stood there, alone, looking at Greedo, mesmerized by its stoical appearance, it seemed to be looking back at me, as if to say, "What the f*** are you looking at?! Don't you know who I am?! Where you are?!"

It had a point. After all, I was in the hallowed halls of Acclaim Studios Austin, formerly Iguana Entertainment, the studio responsible for nearly single-handedly helping to bring New York-based Acclaim Entertainment out from financial difficulty back in 1997, with the mega-hit Turok: Dinosaur Hunter for Nintendo 64. Although the game was knocked on many fronts for its foggy backgrounds and jagged graphics, it boasted many great feats, including being the first first-person shooter on Nintendo's newborn console.

Dienstbier, lead designer for the original Turok game and current creative director of Acclaim Studios Austin, hosted a media tour in April for a behind-the-scenes look at the company's newest effort, Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion. After my visit with Greedo and before he handed the crowd of reporters over to project manager Jeff Everett, Dienstbier, sporting a demeanor much in the same fashion as his prized reptile, touted some of the more impressive advancements included in the new Turok game engine.

"We're doing stuff with our real-time cinemas in this game that I've not seen done before on the N64," he said. "In that we're doing lip-syncing, facial expression —the entire intro cinema is almost seven minutes long.



It's fully lip-synced. It's completely scored from start to finish. It's been storyboarded from day one. The expressiveness on the characters' faces in the close-ups have never been done before. It's very, very convincing—pretty groundbreaking for real-time stuff."

Unlike Perfect Dark, the big FPS competitor to T3 this year, T3 is designed to run completely without the use of the N64 RAM expansion pak, both in the single- and multiplayer modes. Dienstbier assured us that all of the game's maps—20 single player areas and 42 multiplayer arenas—will all run fast (a constant 30 fps) with or without the added RAM, correcting the frame-rate problems that plagued T2.

Due out in September, the new installment in the Turok series takes place 50-75 years in the future and continues the Fireseed family saga, with two new playable characters, Danielle and Joseph Fireseed, the older sister and younger brother, respectively, of the hero from the first two adventures, Joshua Fireseed. The game is played differently depending on which character is being used, as, for instance, there are crawl spaces only Joseph can enter, and only Danielle can grapple up to high elevations.

Each character will have the use of the same eight weapons collected throughout the game, but the upgraded state of the weapons differs for each, bringing the total number of firearms to 24. And, as in the past, they are quite inventive. Three of the weapons leaked to us during the tour were the Cerebral Burst (like T2's Cerebral Bore, except the player controls when to explode the head), the Cerebral Possessor (Cerebral Bore that puts the player into the eyes of the enemy for added enjoyment), and the Fireswarm Cannon (a very cool napalm gun).

In addition to being more puzzle intensive than the original offerings, T3 will include what the company is calling a "living environment." Essentially, events are happening in each of the environments, in real time, whether you are there to witness them or not. There are five worlds with four sprawling levels contained within each world. T3 will also feature real-time shadows, lighting and weather effects, as well as voice samples, including the characters thinking out loud to help players complete an objective ("Hmm...I wonder what that switch does?").

In addition to the frame-rate problems, T2 suffered from an extreme lack of save points. This problem has been addressed in T3 with both auto-save and save-anywhere features.

On the multiplayer front, although not as deep and intricate as Perfect Dark, T3 does have its share of replay value, with a wide variety of customizable options, and eight different gameplay modes, including one called Monkey Tag. After all, it wouldn't be a Turok game without any monkey business. (By the way, in regards to people who claim that they have been able to shoot the tree-climbing monkey in T1, Dienstbier told me, "Let me state it for the record, you cannot kill the monkey in Turok 1.")

Although we were unable to actually play the game, the whirlwind tour through the studio gave us a glimpse of the progress of each of the elements of T3 in one form or another, from character and level designs to the audio programming and real-time cinema production—and from all indications the game is coming together masterfully.

Dienstbier's passion to not stray from the promotion for T3 was evident (as was his sense of humor) right up to the last minute. At the close of the day, when I asked him, during a Q&A session, what's next for his team, he said, "What's next?! Turok 3 is the greatest game that this studio has ever worked on. I'm sorry, you *were* asking about T3 right?"

"No, I actually wanted to know what your plans are after this game?"

"Y'know, the great thing about Turok 3 is that there are two playable characters..." As everyone in the room broke out into laughter (I guess at my expense), I pictured Greedo del Skinko in his corner office with a wry smile on his face. GR

With the appropriate attitude of one whose games have been multimillion sellers, Dave Dienstbier and Greedo del Skinko oversee the progress of Turok 3 from a corner-window office overlooking Austin. We couldn't help but notice the eerie resemblance.

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PS2 PlayStation Dreamcast NINTENDO64

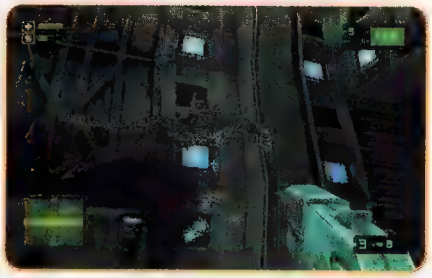
ALIEN RESURRECTION

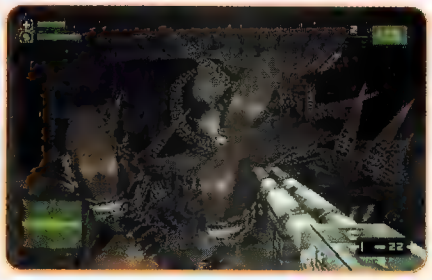
preview by d. halverson • dev: argonaut • pub: Fox • avail: summer 2000

PlayStation

Highly anticipated is an understatement in regards to Fox' Alien Resurrection. The game arrives almost three years after the movie, so I think it's safe to assume that Fox has given the developers ample time to make sure that the game delivers where many think the movie did not. Personally, I consider Resurrection the second best in the series, behind Cameron's *Aliens*, one of the greatest science fiction achievements of the last decade. Visually the film offered a claustrophobic experience I haven't felt since *Predator*, and it looks as though the game will follow suit.

Judging from these screens, I'd have to say that Argonaut (Starfox, Buck Bumble) has attained perhaps the highest visual quality possible for the PS, a fitting swan song to the series on 32-bit. **GR**



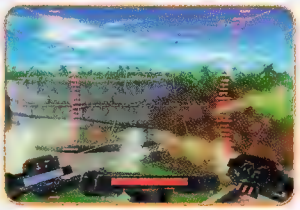


GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

preview by m. hobbs • dev: gamearts • pub: capcom • avail: tba

PS2

The original Gun Griffon and its sequel are regarded as near-classics on the Sega Saturn. Both games offered up unprecedented levels of mission-based mech action, with a faster, more frenzied approach than From Software's later Armored Core series. Now, GameArts is planning to bring this intensity to the PlayStation 2 with Gun Griffon Blaze, and based on the video shown at this year's Tokyo Game Show, we can expect great things from this title. With its sprawling environments, amazing special effects, and classic Gun Griffon action, From's Armored Core 2 will certainly have its work cut out for it. **GR**

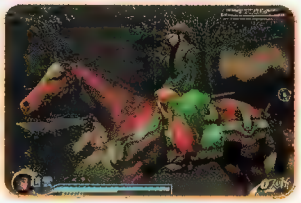


SHIN SANGOKU MUSSOU

preview by m. hobbs • dev/pub: koei • avail: tba

PS2

Few expected a sequel to Sangoku Mussou (Dynasty Warriors), Koei's surprisingly good weapons-based one-on-one fighter. Even fewer expected a sequel that would inhabit a completely different genre. Such is the case with Shin (New) Sangoku Mussou, a straight-up action game with the classic Koei slant towards feudal Japan. As these shots show, and as we were privy to at this year's TGS, this game offers up an amazing level of enemy population as your character mows down literal swarms of marauding foes. Good old-fashioned action/violence never looked better. Isn't that just what the PS2 is for? **GR**



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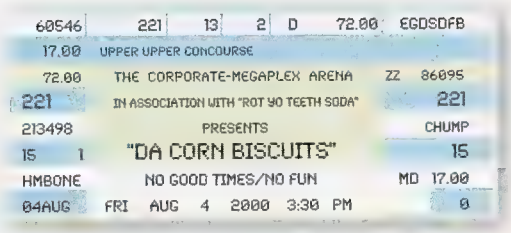
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July 2000

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May 2000

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PS2 PlayStation Dreamcast NINTENDO 64

HOGS OF WAR

preview by b. fiechter • dev: infogrames uk • pub: infogrames • avail: summer

PlayStation

In Hog World, British, French, American, German, Japanese and Russian hogs have played nice long enough. These six belligerent nations are at war, hell bent on territorial and technological conquest.

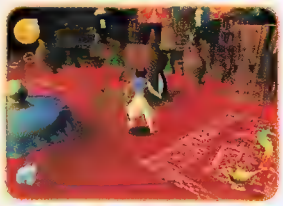
It's not often you get to pit an army of hogs against each other in a battle to the death, but with the surprisingly fresh and entertaining Hogs of War, you just might wish you could have done so a long time ago. This 3D turn-based military strategy game places you on large battlefields where the central objective is to obliterate the opposing pigs. Either in vehicles or on foot, your plump soldiers must deal with varying terrain, master the trajectories of an assortment of weapons, and make sure the clock doesn't wind down before you find the best position for attack. Surviving pigs can be promoted with battle points, which enhances such abilities as medic skills and knowledge of heavy artillery. Bring a friend into the battle, and I guarantee you'll wonder where the time went. **GR**

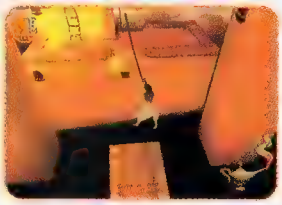
ALADDIN I.N.R.

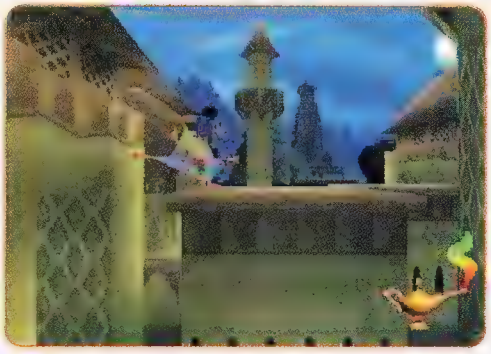
preview by b. fiechter • dev: eurocom • pub: disney • avail: aug

PlayStation

Disney's Aladdin in Nasira's Revenge is billed as a game that's—brace yourself—"fun for the entire family," and this action-platformer looks to be visually impressive if little else. Its colorful, lively world is inspired by the Aladdin animated series, with characters popping up like Abu, Jasmine, Lago and Jafar. **GR**





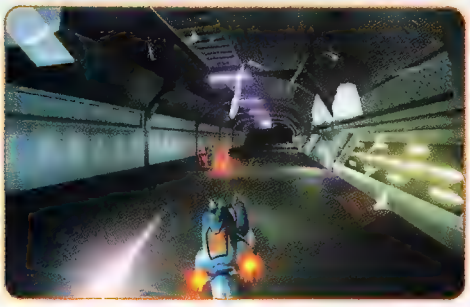


MOTOR MAYHEM

preview by b. fiechter • dev/pub: infogrames • avail: fall

PS2

In 2166, beings across the galaxy love to head to Earth and race incredibly fast road bikes that shoot high-powered weapons for sport. Very cathartic. The winners get to go home with their names engraved on the World Vehicle Combat League trophy. **GR**

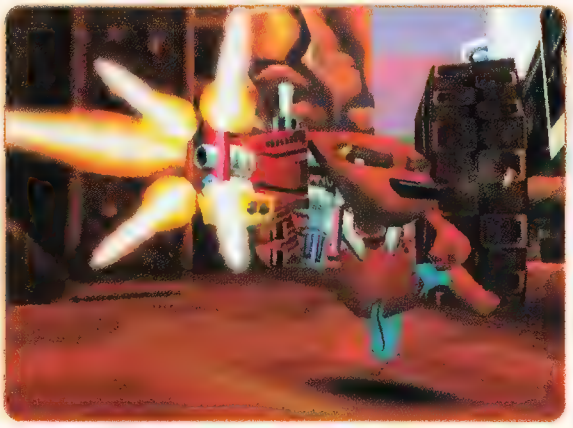


FUR FIGHTERS

preview by d. halverson • dev: bizarre creations • pub: acclaim • avail: june

Until recently my high praise for Fur Fighters was based on a very brief play test of an early version, the intel we gathered from last year's ECTS, and, of course, the premise and character designs.

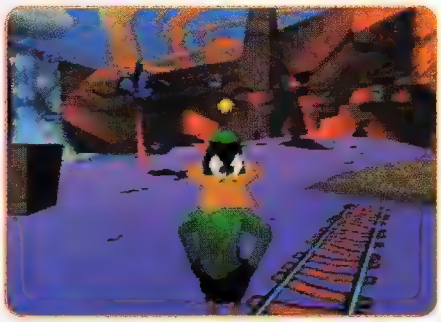
But now having played a somewhat buttoned-up version, I'm elated that the game seems it will actually exceed my lofty expectations. FF takes over where DK 64 left off and conveniently sports the same control scheme as MDK 2, so Acclaim's timing couldn't be better. Coming off of MDK 2, this is your obvious next destination on the Dreamcast highway. The carefully balanced gameplay comprising shooting, puzzle solving and exploration, coupled with the stunning visuals and ultra-diverse cast of characters should equate to one of the year's best Dreamcast entries. **GR**

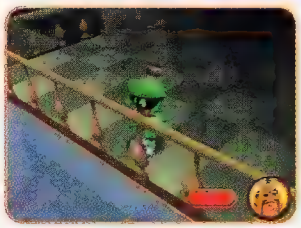


DUCK DODGERS

preview by j.r. haugen • dev: paradigm • pub: infogrames • avail: june

Duck Dodgers shows the good things you can do with a big-name cartoon license, as opposed to something like, ahem, Disney's Magical Racing Tour. The sound effects and visuals are faithful, throwing you into the cartoony science fiction future of the 24th and 1/2 century in Dodgers' attempt to defeat Marvin the Martian, one of the best cartoon villains of all time. Expect to see lots of familiar Looney Toons elements, such as Acme gizmos and rockets. The control is a little awkward and the camera needs some work, but aside from that, the game is a lot of fun. Daffy also chimes in with his trademark phrases from time to time to keep you entertained. Additionally, there will be a bunch of mini-games to unlock. Super Mario 64 it isn't, but Duck Dodgers is a capable 3D platform game that should satisfy even the non-Warner Brothers fanatic. GR





EVOLUTION 2

preview by m. hobbs • dev: sting • pub: ubi soft • avail: july

Ubi Soft was wise to recognize the quality of the original Evolution from Japanese developers Sting, and it's encouraging that the sequel, a better and more ambitious game with massive dollops of appeal, is benefiting from a quick turnaround schedule, and should be hitting these shores in July.

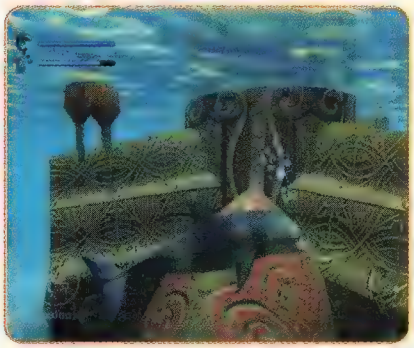
Though stylistically very similar to the first game, a number of improvements surround Mag Launcher and his returning cast of comrades. Towns are now more elaborate, for instance, and one has the option of shifting the camera to a lower, more dramatic third-person perspective, joining the original's tilted overhead cam. This new view option is also available in dungeons, which also feature a number of fixed layouts and greater levels of interaction in addition to the randomly generated areas found in the first Evolution.

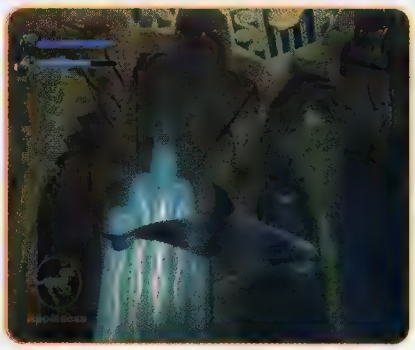
Evolution 2 should be a perfect game to while away the months leading up to Eternal Arcadia. We're looking forward to getting our hands on the complete translated version. GR

ECCO: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

preview by d. halverson • dev: appaloosa • pub: sega • avail: june

As soon as you begin to manipulate Ecco, Sega's beloved Dolphin of 16-bit lore, you'll instinctively jump, flip, swim, and glide through the glimmering sea, melting into the game's intuitive control. But don't fiddle around for too long; there's an ecological disaster at hand and Ecco must bolt into the past to save the future. The game scenario initially guides you through a host of simplistic assignments, teaching you how to feed, speak with the other creatures, such as turtles, whales, and other dolphins, and, most importantly, come to terms with the joy of controlling a dolphin. Making your way through the next situation, things get a little tougher as the fabric of the game begins to unfurl. Shark duty is up first and then soon after you'll be asked to complete simple tasks, swimming between areas of a vast, clear water channels. Here Ecco must learn two new songs, one to stun the sharks, making them easier prey, and another to lure schools of fish to follow Ecco, illuminating the way through the dark perilous underwater tunnels that link the coastal pools. It's all very serene, yet action-packed—a truly unique gameplay experience as beautiful as it is engaging and fun. Segaphiles will take to this new chapter like a fish to water, but for those of you who haven't gone swimming with Sega's other mascot, just imagine a vast underwater action/RPG, as rich in puzzle solving and action as any, yet serene and beautiful at the same time. While a final grade will have to wait until next issue, one thing is for sure, Appaloosa has obviously put forth a concerted effort, tendering some of the most breathtaking visuals ever seen in a video game. If the game is even close to as good as the graphics, I may never eat tuna again. GR





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Spyro: Year of the Dragon

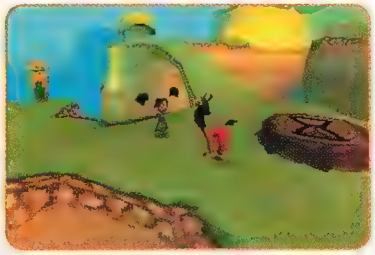
preview by b fiechter • dev: insomniac • pub: universal interactive • avail: nov

It's a bit of a disappointment that Spyro won't be taking flight on PlayStation 2, but I'm more than looking forward to a third installment of this accomplished series on PlayStation. Spyro's latest predicament finds him searching for stolen dragon eggs, which are scattered across 30 entirely new lands. No longer flying solo, Spyro is aided by four little creatures who have their own worlds to explore. In addition to driving a tank, riding a speedboat, and piloting a submarine, Spyro will be sharpshooting, skateboarding and... boxing. Brings back bad memories of Medievil 2. **GR**

Emperor's New Groove

preview by b. fiechter • dev: argonaut • pub: disney • avail: dec

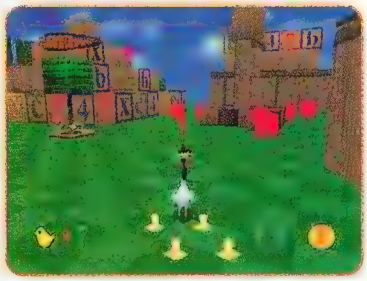
Based on *Disney's Emperor's New Groove*, due in theaters in December, this action-platformer of the same name takes place in a cheerful Inca kingdom, where a sardonic emperor named Kuzco is transformed into a llama. Your goal is to guide Kuzco back to his palace to retrieve the magic potion that will restore him to his human form. More than 30 levels compose Emperor's New Groove, populated with characters inspired by the feature film. **GR**



Mort the Chicken

preview by b. fiechter • pub: crave • avail: fall

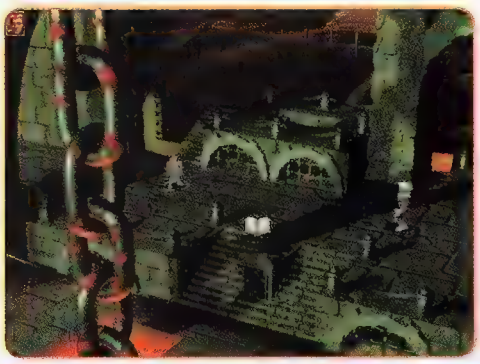
Just last week many of the editors in the office were wondering why a chicken has never been a protagonist in a video game - preferably one with a comb that is longer than its neck. I guess wishes really do come true. Here is Mort the Chicken, an action-platformer starring Mort the chicken. Exactly what drives a chicken to go on an adventure and solve lots of puzzles is not quite known. Maybe Mort should have just stayed in the slaughterhouse. **GR**

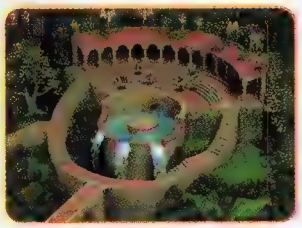


Silver

preview by b. fiechter • dev: funcom • pub: infogrames • avail: summer

Transplanted from the PC to Dreamcast, this lovely RPG draws its appeal from a rich vein of medieval designs and natural environmental sounds. You assume the role of David, a common man forced into battle as his wife and other village women are kidnapped by an archmage named Silver. On his journey, David will cross through hundreds of unique areas, exploring towns, caves, dungeons, and castles. It's a familiar RPG world, but instead of the typical turn-based battles, conflict in Silver's universe is portrayed in real time, and you can control up to three characters as you wield your sword and cast powerful magic. **GR**



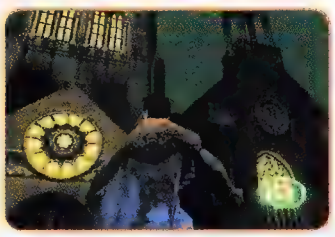


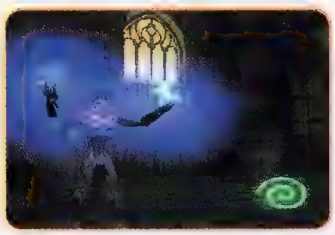
Legacy of Kain: S. R. 2

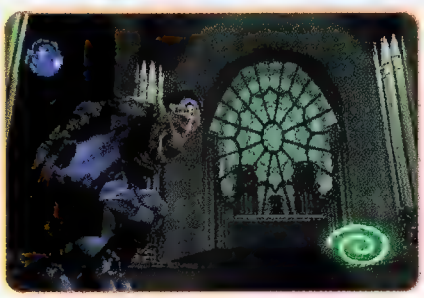
preview by b. fiechter • dev: crystal dynamics • pub: eidos • avail: fall

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver was a magnificent game, but its one crippling flaw was an obvious state of incompleteness. Not a single glyph was necessary to finish the game, and the ending felt abrupt and forced. But now that the compelling foundation has been formed, this sequel is primed to move Raziel's journey even deeper into the abyss of darkness fans of this series have come to love.

Little has changed in the desolate, gothic world of Nosgoth, and once again you must guide Raziel through both the spectral and material planes of existence, impaling your foe and devouring its soul. Kain is still at the center of the quest, residing in Nosgoth's past, where you must travel to discover the source of the vampire clans' extinction. **GR**







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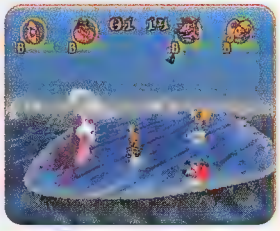
CRASH BASH

preview by b. fiechter • dev: eurocom • pub: universal • avail: nov

Consider this a test: it's the first game with the Crash Bandicoot theme not created by master developers Naughty Dog. It's also a pretty cool idea: stick Crash and friends and foes in battle arenas for multiplayer competition. There's an adventure mode, which is a bit like the classic Crash platformers, and the battle mode, in which you beat the crap out of each other. There will also be a few puzzle elements to deal with while you beat the crap out of each other. GR



MOJO RALLY

preview by c. hoffman • dev: climax • pub: rockstar games • avail: october

Rockstar's first Austin Powers game will be a Dreamcast racer called Mojo Rally. Players will be able to select from several movie characters like Austin, Dr. Evil, Vanessa Kensington, Mini-Me, and Fat Bastard, each with their own personalized vehicles and weapons. The game's 15 courses are drawn from locales in the films (like Dr. Evil's moon base). Other features include random weather effects and multiplayer action. GR

FREESTYLE BMX

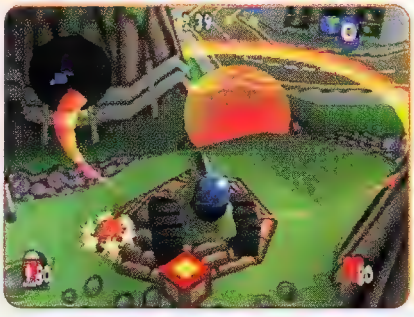
preview by b. fiechter • dev: z-axis • pub: acclaim • avail: summer

Obviously inspired by Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, this freestyle BMX game features freestyle champ Dave Mirra, as well as nine other well-known riders. Starting out with a rusty bike in the back yard, you work your way through the ranks, gaining prestige and the lavish prizes that come with it: clothing, new bikes, sponsors, and equipment. Hundreds of different tricks and combinations are available to a skilled rider, allowing you to basically come up with your own unique runs. You also choose your own lines, and when you screw up, real-time crashes will display the painful damage. GR

TEAM BUDDIES

preview by j.r. haugen • dev/pub: psygnosis • avail: july

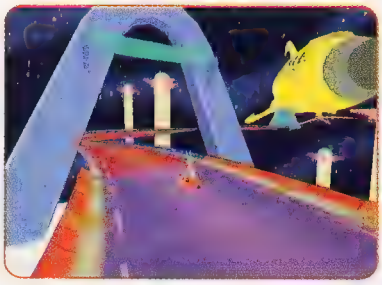
It's good to see they're finally making games that can appeal to ravers as well as everyone else. The colorful Team Buddies is a manic yet cuddly killfest that combines elements from all sorts of games, most noticeably Bomberman and Poy Poy. Your Buddies look like little inflatable Duplo characters, and are placed into a battlefield. By taking the crates that are lying around and building and combining them in different ways, you bust them open to get all kinds of things, from uzis and bombs to new Buddies with different skills, like Ninja Buddy and Commando Buddy. The goal is usually to take out all opposing Buddies, but there are other play modes, such as Capture the Pig and the soccer-like BombBall. And of course there is a quad-screen multiplayer mode spanning 20 levels, which is sure to be extremely chaotic fun. Team Buddies is set to ship in July, with over 60 missions across eight worlds. GR



L. T. SPACE RACE

preview by b. fiechter • dev/pub: infogrames • avail: tba

Squeezing a bit more juice out of its Looney Tunes license, Infogrames is stepping into kart racing land with Looney tunes Space Race. You know the drill: drive cute characters through bright, cheery levels and set traps and shoot an assortment of weapons at your competitors. This one takes place in outer space, and, of course, has the Acme Corporation flourishes. GR



VOLLEYBALL

preview by b. fiechter • dev/pub: infogrames • avail: fall

Let's just call this game Volleyball for now: its official title won't be announced till E3. About the only thing we can say about this officially licensed take on the sport is that it contains all the moves you'd expect in a pro-beach volleyball game: digging, spinning, setting, blocking, etc. Props to Infogrames for being the first developer to bring this sport to the PlayStation. GR

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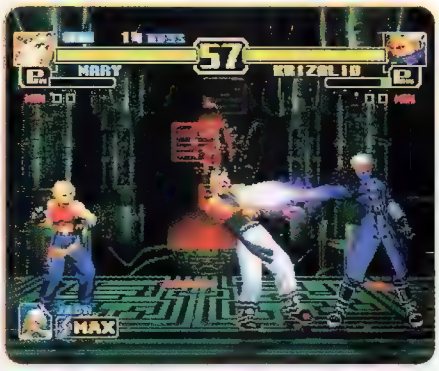
KING OF FIGHTERS '99 EVOLUTION

preview by c. hoffman • dev/pub: snk • avail: tba

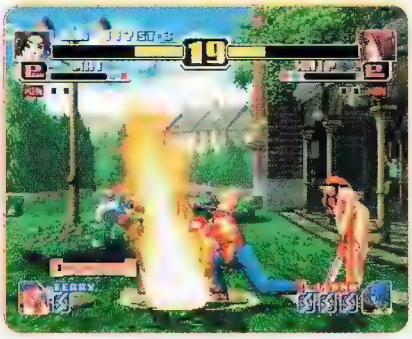
King of Fighters '99 Evolution marks a return to greatness for SNK. Not to be confused with KOF '99 Dream Bout on Dreamcast (which was a conversion of the excellent KOF '98 coin-op), Evolution is superior in every way to the PlayStation version of KOF '99. It takes SNK's classic team fighting engine and kicks it up with flawless control, new battle arenas, 3D backgrounds and the addition of a fourth "striker" character on each team to add more to the battles than ever before.

This great conversion really plays up the Dreamcast's strengths with the enhanced backgrounds. Some backgrounds have fully animated scenery that changes as the fight progresses, like a massive airplane and runway taxi that fluidly move around as you battle. Other scenes, like the fairground, explode with gorgeous color and special effects such as fireworks and a spinning carousel. Even little things, like water dripping off a table, add extra visual appeal.

On top of the graphics, the game has a massive character roster with a whopping 33 playable characters, including newcomers like K', Jhun and Maxima, plus favorites from past years like Terry, Leona, Lori and Kyo (actually, three versions of Kyo). The DC version even features more fighters than the coin-op, including several exclusive striker characters and the ability to play as the last boss, Krizalid, from the start.



The only problems with KOF '99 are that the character graphics still look 32-bit and, despite the name, KOF hasn't evolved much in terms of gameplay, making it seem awfully dated against newer, flashier fighters. It's still a rock-solid game for fighting purists and a winner from SNK. GR

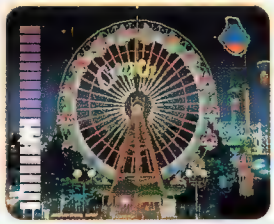


INCREDIBLE CRISIS

preview by m. hobbs • dev: polygon magic • pub: interplay • avail: tba

This is one of the most bizarre, twisted, and fun games we've seen in some time. Thank Interplay for having the guts to release Incredible Crisis, a collection of insane mini-games all linked together by a story that's as outlandish as it is funny.

One of the most subversive mini-games is the ferris wheel game. Here, a man operates blindly, attempting to find the, uh, g-spot of a woman he's just met in the dark confines of a ferris wheel gondola. As you move the PS pad about, the woman will intone, "A little higher," or, "A little to the left." After some trial and error, she'll let you know in no uncertain terms that the spot's been found, whereupon the circle button must be pressed in a feverish fashion until satisfaction is attained. The other games are more tame, and many are parodies of popular American movies and other games. There is a Dance Dance Revolution-inspired event where you perform office calisthenics, and a game inspired by Independence Day, where a UFO must be protected from the onslaught of battleships and attacking fighter jets.



With dozens of such inspired and really fun little games, Incredible Crisis will never leave you bored. And hopefully, the game's very Japanese flavor will make it intact through the localization. GR

DESTRUCTION DERBY

preview by j.r. haugen • dev: studio 33 • pub: psygnosis • avail: august

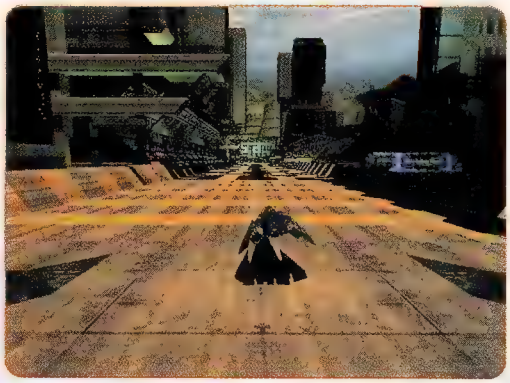
It's been quite some time since the last Destruction Derby hit the PlayStation, but Psygnosis still has the series in mind, as DD Raw is nearing completion. To one-up the standard demolition derby theme, you can now use combination moves inspired by professional wrestling, like the Bone Cruncher and the Undertaker (the parallels to the WWF are quite apparent). Every part of your car is destructible, and cars can be upgraded as well. AI balance has been tweaked so that it no longer means the most powerful car will win. The physics have also been improved, as you are now able to do flips and spins, in addition to handbrake maneuvers. The game will feature a total of 24 cars and 25 tracks, including three skyscraper arenas, and you can play it along with three of your friends. GR

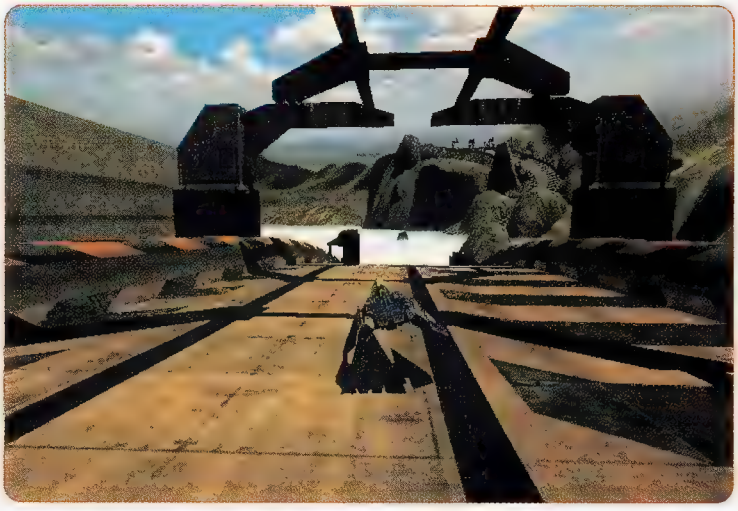
WIPEOUT FUSION

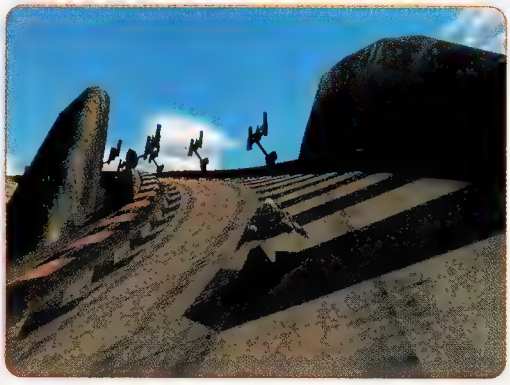
preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev:* **psygnosis** • *pub:* **sony** • *avail:* **fall**

If you recognize the unmatched greatness of the Wipeout series as I do, please join me in looking at these screen shots and imagining what it will be like to play a new Wipeout game on PlayStation 2. Imagine dipping into that fog that settles over the track, zipping past the towering trackside structures of concrete and steel at 60 fps.

Developed by Psygnosis' Liverpool Studio, this latest in one of the best and most original racing combat games is raw Wipeout, fleshed out with a number of progressive designs. The ships are much more sophisticated, truly defying gravity as they now move into inverted positions. The courses are wider and don't necessarily limit the pilot to a direct path, lending a greater level of freedom and interaction to the game. As Wipeout Fusion continues to expand its development cycle, there will certainly be countless touches added to fuel our excitement: just imagine the lighting effects on the exhaust and weapons. **GR**







NGEN RACING

preview by **m. hobbs** • *dev:* **curly monsters** • *pub:* **infogrames** • *avail:* **summer**

Aircraft racing has been tried before on the PlayStation. Some may remember Xing's Bravo Air Race, a graphically underpowered air racing game featuring the likes of prop-powered Gee Bees. NGEN Racing takes a vastly different track, with high-speed jets and a sleek, ambitious look—not too surprising when one is aware that members of the Wipeout development staff worked on this game.

And like Wipeout, NGEN excels in subjective qualities, as our preview version demonstrated a good understanding of what makes for a good racing/combat game. With its progressive learning curve, the dynamics of piloting jets through twisting, rising and falling courses can be quickly grasped, and once learned, there are a variety of techniques to help one go faster. Flying low to the ground increases speed, and not only does this introduce a level of skill in following the topographically varied environments, but has the added benefit of enhancing the game's sensation of speed. There are also afterburner power-ups that can be grabbed, and these are essential for victory, but in a way that is far more engaging than the ubiquitous nitros in Midway's Thunder games.

Weapons also play an integral role in NGEN's gameplay, but developers Curly Monsters have taken a satisfying approach in that the planes carry with them a fixed arsenal of cannons, rockets, missiles, and chaff. There are no power-ups to go after, allowing one to concentrate more fully on racing.

Along with an appropriately modern electronic score, Curly Monster's NGEN Racing has all the earmarks of a proper next-generation racing/combat title. Whether it lives up to the Wipeout franchise remains to be seen, but it could at the very least be a great alternative. **GR**

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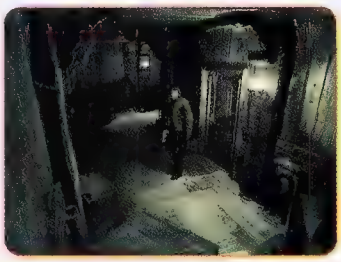
ALONE IN THE DARK 4

preview by jr haugen • dev: darkworks • pub: infogrames • avail: summer

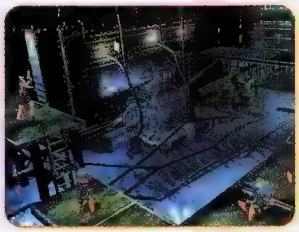
The Alone in the Dark games are the parents whose Resident Evil children have been having a party while they were away. Well, Alone in the Dark is back, and ready to lay down the law. As opposed to the neo-technological terror in many survival horror games, AitD relies on the tried-and-true setting of the 1920s based loosely on the work of H.P. Lovecraft, involving antediluvian cosmic deities and bizarre unspeakable horrors, usually in menacing old mansions. In the fourth installment (whose subtitle is yet to be determined), you resume the role of the hapless Edward Carnby, who sports a sleek new look, in search of a friend on the foreboding Shadow Island. The prerendered backgrounds we've seen are all beautifully and elaborately detailed, and the lighting effects are nothing short of amazing, taking full advantage of the system's hardware. The sound and voice acting are sure to be on the same level. With few exceptions, games like this have rarely created a sense of dread, but AitD really plays upon the psyche. The series' sheer creepiness has always had the potential to blow Code Veronica out of the water, and if done right, the newest version could set the standard for all survival horror games to follow. GR

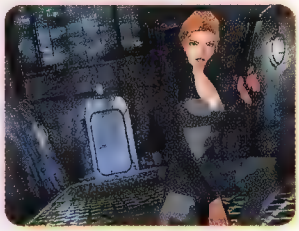


FEAR EFFECT 2

preview by b. fiechter • dev: kronos • pub: eidos • avail: fall

Visually intriguing, cinematically ambitious, the engrossing and flawed Fear Effect is already nearing its second chapter with Fear Effect: Retro Helix. Presented as a prequel, the game follows the early lives of the original three mercenaries Hana Tsu-Vachel, Royce Glass and Jakob Decourt. The solemn, adult-themed story introduces a new face, Rain Qin, a darkly enigmatic friend of Hana. Retaining the same gritty, anime and sci-fi-inspired imagery of the first game, Fear Effect: Retro Helix will take us through an alternate reality of Hong Kong and other locations like Hell's Kitchen and the Walled City of Xi'an. Story elements will be just as important to the game's effect, and emphasis is again being placed on cinematic ambience, with over 120 minutes of computer generated sequences and 800 camera angles framing the game's world. GR





MAGICAL RACING TOUR

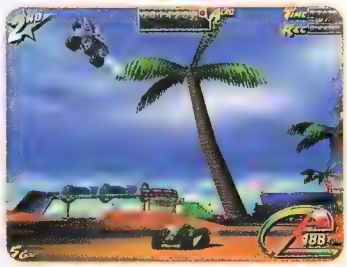
preview by b fiechter • dev: crystal dynamics • pub: eidos • avail: june

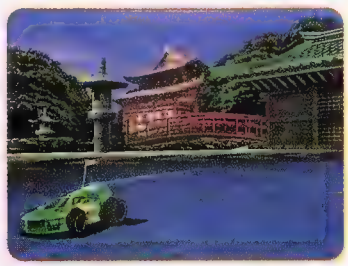
Opinions are divided on the PlayStation version of Walt Disney World Quest—Magical Racing Tour. Some are turned off by the suffocatingly sweet, uninspired, thrift-shop Disney characters—where's Mickey Mouse? Pinocchio? Snow White?—but others enjoy racing through the Disney World universe, inspired by areas like Pirates of the Caribbean, Space Mountain and Epcot. Other than the Disney theme, this combat racer is standard fare, with weapons like acorn missiles and frog spells mirroring the orbiting shells and lightning bolt in Mario Kart. Rarely are these games truly original, so I guess I can't criticize this game too much. At least not until the review. GR

STUNT GP

preview by jr haugen • dev: team 17 • pub: infogrames • avail: summer

It's been so long since the last racing game for the Dreamcast that the world has pretty much concluded the category is dead. Infogrames is here to change all that with Stunt GP, which, judging by the screens, looks like it could be a pretty good game. It looks a lot like Re-Volt, which is a good thing. Stunt GP is going to combine the best elements of racing games and circus games (which don't exist), with high-flying stunts and high-speed driving maneuvers. We'll see the game in more detail at E3, so expect to learn more in our next issue. GR





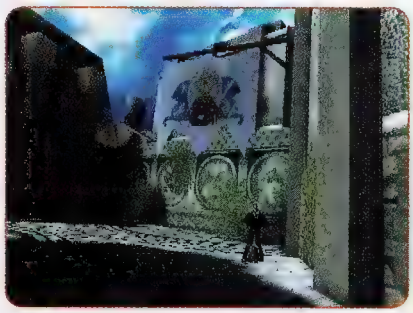
SUMMONER

preview by **b fiechter** • *dev:* **volition** • *pub:* **thq** • *avail:* **fall**

An ambitious and very welcome RPG from the creators of Descent and FreeSpace, Summoner tells the mystical story of Joseph, a beleaguered young man born with a gift of summoning. As a child, Joseph called on the powers of a demon to save his village from attackers, but his good intentions turned tragic as the spirit decimated everything he held dear.

Years later, Joseph is urged to uncover the rings of channeling needed to invoke his ability once again, and he befriends three travelers on his journey across the kingdom. Their quest takes them into the wilderness, to ancient temples and ruins, to a great stream flowing from Heaven itself.

The story has been inspired by literature, folklore, and mythology, its complexity meant to underpin the adventure. Volition is also focusing on cinematic aspects to pull you into Summoner's arcane world, with several in-game cinematics progressing the story. In battle, an assortment of weapons and magic can be deployed by your party, which includes up to five characters and summoned monsters. **GR**



PUZZLE BOBBLE 4

preview by **b fiechter** • *dev:* **taito** • *pub:* **acclaim** • *avail:* **june**

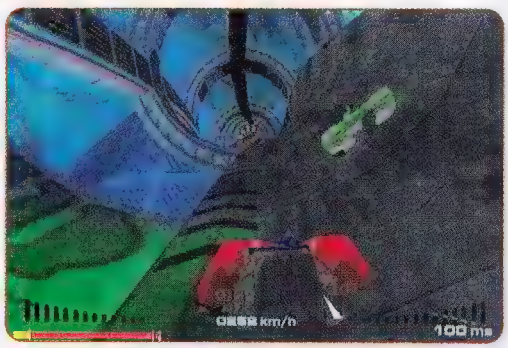
Just when you thought this delightful puzzle game couldn't possibly recycle its look and gameplay yet again, it does just that. As before, colored orbs are shot from a little cannon in the bottom of the screen, bouncing off the walls and ceiling or moving straight up to stick to the collection of orbs hanging from the ceiling. When three like colors are linked, the bunch drops to the floor. The object is to take out as many surrounding orbs as possible, making sure that different colors are stuck below the group you are trying to dislodge.

This addictively simple mechanic has always remained at the core of Puzzle Bobble, with a few minor twists added to keep gamers coming back. On Dreamcast, you get new characters, bright colors, and big chain reactions can now wipe out nearly the entire screen. It's Puzzle Bobble, folks. **GR**

MAG FORCE RACING

preview by **b fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **crave** • *avail:* **june**

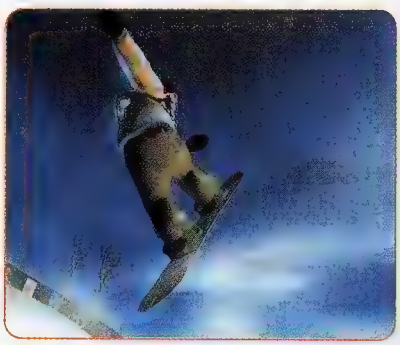
Think of Mag Force as a mixture of Wipeout, Extreme G, and an utter dearth of appealing design. What is up with those ships, the lighting and the color scheme? Unfortunately, the game doesn't play much better than it looks, hinged to a physics model that makes the cars feel like you're moving the paddle in Pong. **GR**



ESPN X GAMES SNOWBOARDING

preview by **b fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **konami** • *avail:* **tba**

It already looks good, but Konami insists that ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding is going to look even better when it's completed, a PlayStation 2 showcase containing incredibly natural texture and lighting details. Other than an open-mountain run, the game doesn't deviate much from what you would expect from a snowboarding title, offering four different events—Big Air, Border Cross, Halfpipe, and Slopestyle—ESPN commentary, and recognizable boarders from the Olympics and professional competition. **GR**



gamers' republic REVIEWS

GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

Domestic Reviews

4-Wheel Thunder	DC	D+
Excitebike 64	N64	A-
I-Spy	DC	C-
Kirby 64	N64	B-
MDK 2	DC	A-
NFS: Porsche Challenge	PS	C+
Nightmare Creatures 2	PS	B+
Perfect Dark	N64	A
SW Episode One: Racer	DC	B-
Tomb Raider 4	DC	B-
Vagrant Story	PS	A-
Vanguard Bandits	PS	B

Import Reviews

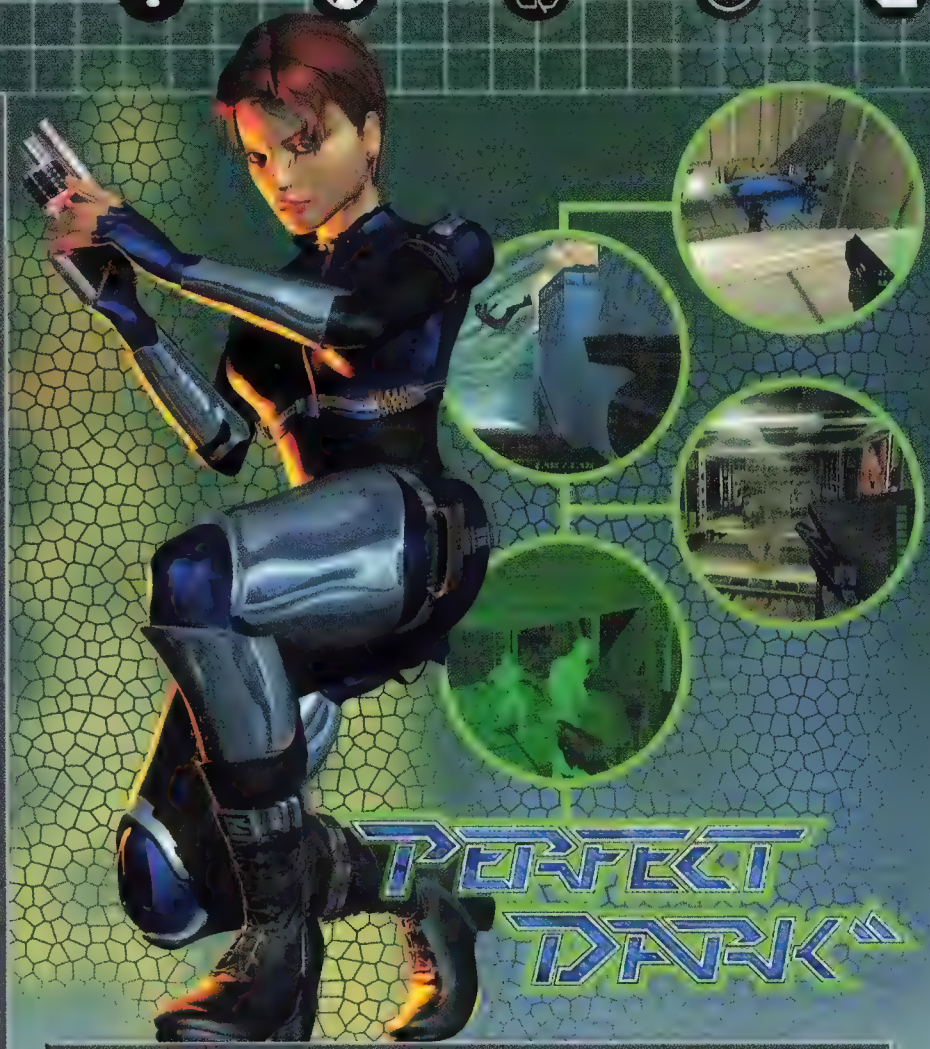
Billiard Master 2	PS2	B-
Drummania	PS2	B
Fantavision	PS2	B+
Final Fight Revenge	SAT	D-
Golf Paradise	PS2	A-
Gradius III&IV	PS2	A-
Twinkle Star Sprites	DC	C+

Sports Reviews

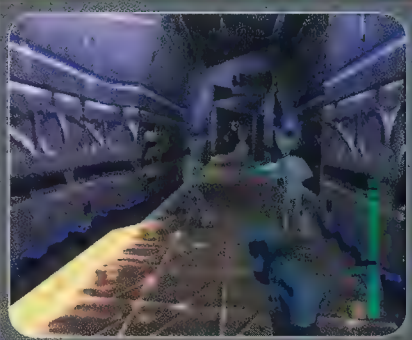
Arena Football Unl...d	PS	C+
Striker Pro 2000	DC	B+
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	DC	B+

Handheld Reviews

Last Blade: B. T. D.	NGPC	B
Road to El Dorado	GBC	C+
Wario Land 2	GBC	A-



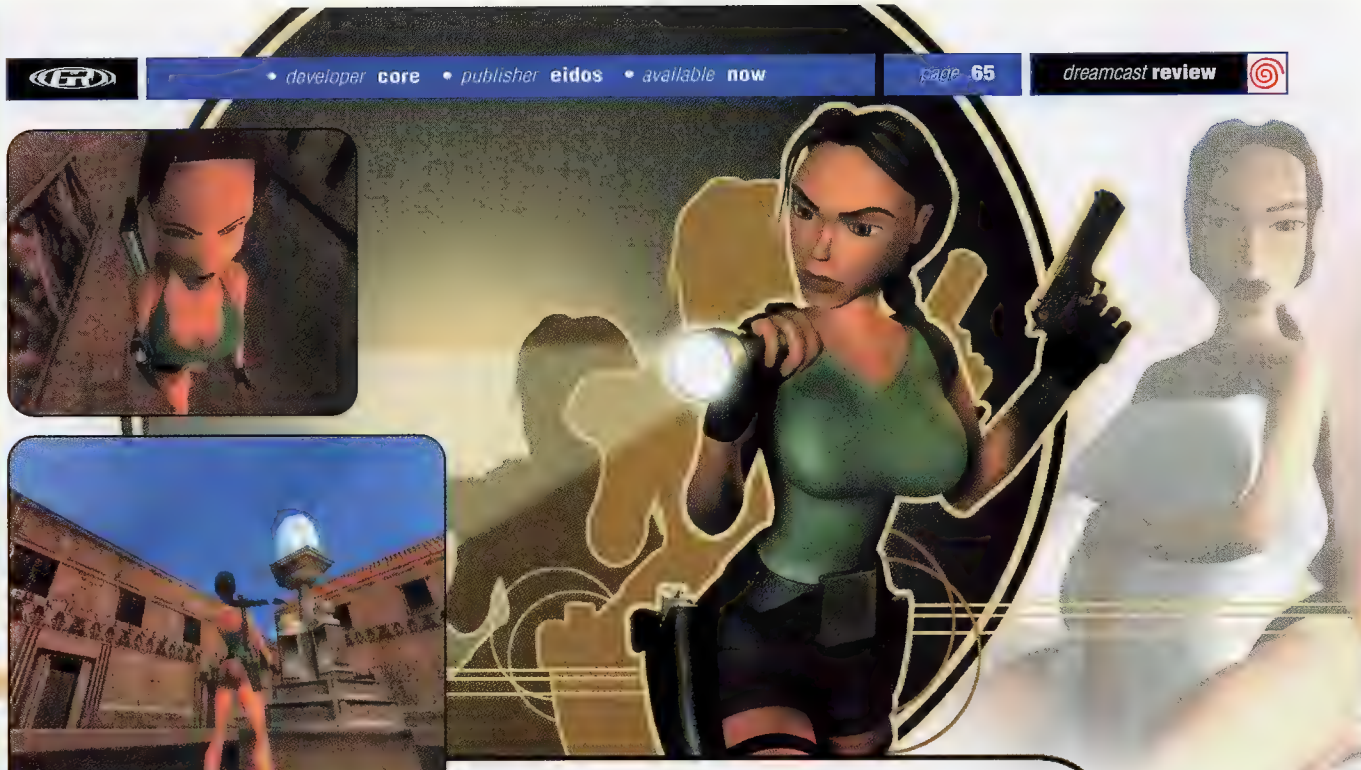
GAME OF THE MONTH



PERFECT DARK

DEVELOPER: RARE • PUBLISHER: RARE

In this case, "perfect" says it all. Those wondering whether or not RARE would be able to recapture the excitement of Goldeneye can rest assured as they have surpassed it in every way imaginable.



TOMB RAIDER
THE LAST REVELATION

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Not so much Tomb Raider for the Dreamcast as much as Tomb Raider on the Dreamcast.

Lara's last revelation is a PS port... Dreamcast owners deserve better

As a big fan of the non-linear experience, I'm the first guy in line when a good adventure game comes along, especially when it carries the Tomb Raider label. And while Core has crossed the line with the exploration elements in Lara's last revelation on the PlayStation—which has become the first on the oft-victimized Dreamcast—I can't help but keep a candle burning for a series that has obviously become too mainstream for its own good.

First of all, one must ask the question, how many ports can one system sustain before its users make signs and march on the company headquarters? I really hate to see the Dreamcast become a dumping ground for every PlayStation game that generates a minor buzz, a mere means for companies to squeeze more dollars out of properties obviously designed for lesser hardware.

That said, other than falling into the "port" category, The Last Revelation is another fine, albeit somewhat too familiar, game of Tomb Raider—if you can get past the frustration factor that weighs heavily on the game's overall design. The strategy-guide rights to this one are worth their weight in lost booty, because if ever there existed a game that seemed designed specifically around a hint book, this is it. Without a walk-through of some kind—and I deplore using them—in the time you inevitably burn finding your way and unearthing items, you could fly to the UK and ask the developers exactly what the hell they were thinking.

For a PlayStation game, the environments in Last Revelation are some of the best looking of the series, spanning both far and wide, emitting a desolate Egyptian aura. On the Dreamcast, however, cleaned up but not re-textured, they come across as somewhat lackluster. The models, too, even Lara, are dreadfully simplistic. Backing Lara into a corner to examine her, ahem, architecture, as all Tomb Raider fans must, reveals the painfully nominal character model—the one aspect of the game I was hoping Core would attend to. I appreciate the smoothed out lines, solidity, and effects the Dreamcast version brings, but loathe the primitive structural design, blurry textures, and those archaic models. After eyeballing the likes of Eternal Arcadia, Berserk, and other such Dreamcast-exclusive software, Tomb Raider's port-infused characteristics stand out like a freshly hammered thumb.

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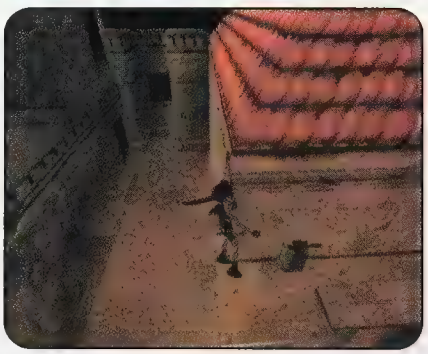


- CLEANED UP PS VISUALS FALL SHORT
- DREADFULLY COMPLEX LEVELS TOO LARGE FOR THEIR OWN GOOD
- NO MUSIC TO SPEAK OF
- IT'S STILL TOMB RAIDER. SO WHO CARES

REPUBLIC SAYS... I'M HOLDING OUT FOR A TOMB RAIDER DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PS2 OR DREAMCAST BUT LARA'S DIE-HARD FANS WILL SURELY FLOCK TO HER LATEST ESCAPADE.

B-

MDK 2

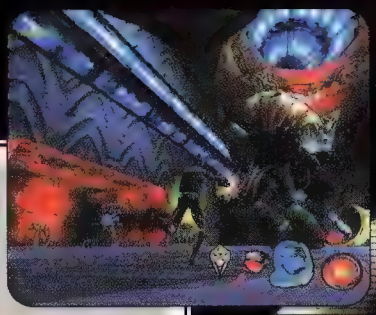
BY DAVE HALVERSON

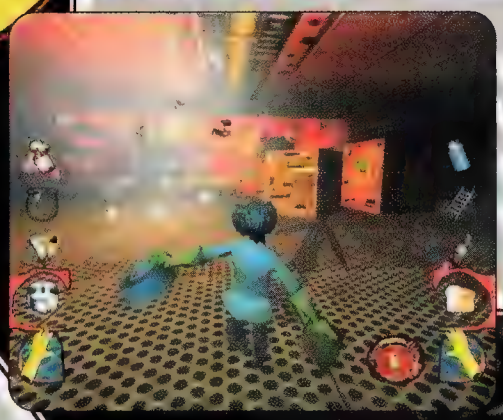
One of the first thoroughbred Dreamcast action games, Bioware's MDK 2 delivers one of the console's Shiny-est moments

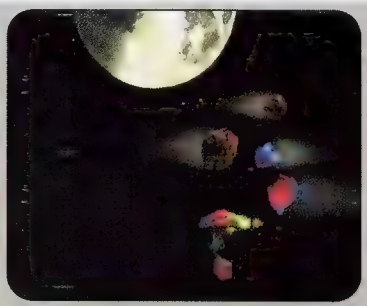
After an extensive stretch of perilous platforming, taking out the alien intruders who've breached his ship, the Jim-Dandy, along the way, Dr. Hawkins emerges through the hydraulic cargo bay doors. To his right stands a large, very deadly alien. He could kill him, but this particular breed takes a bit of time and ample dodging to put down, especially since Dr. Hawkins' only weapon is an atomic toaster. To his left, a large toggle switch protrudes from the wall. Making his way to the switch, using the crates between him and the alien for cover, the good Doctor flips the switch, triggering a massive decompression episode. The compartment's oxygen supply is immediately exhausted and everything that's not nailed down begins to get sucked through the air lock. The Doctor has succeeded in exterminating the alien and escaping the ship's hold, but now a new set of problems has arisen. Namely, he can't walk or breathe due to the vacuum. What to do? As the Doc gets sucked closer and closer to the abyss of space, he luckily happens upon a magnet. Since you already have some duct tape in inventory, you can craft him some handy magnetic slippers, but now that the Doctor can walk, what about air? Ah-ha! That fish bowl you found a few rooms ago makes a perfect space helmet. The Dr. can now walk and breathe, but his plight is not over. He must survive the lengthy space walk to the ship's main chamber. Too bad there's a menacing alien ship hovering about, spewing laser blasts that carry an unfairly wide blast radius. As he lumbers at snail's pace across the ship's gigantic hull, dodging in half speed, you'll have only one thing on your mind—the next checkpoint.

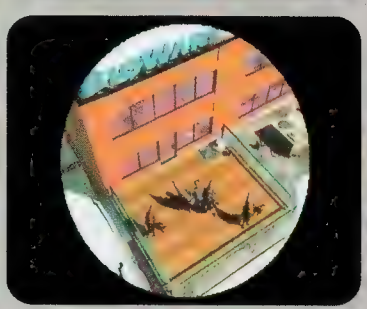
And so it goes in just one small piece of one scenario in MDK 2, where three completely different types of characters lead to three totally different types of gameplay converging to equal one of the finest adventure games in recent memory.

Having lived my life vicariously between checkpoints for the latter part of two days helping the Doctor, his dog Max, and his janitor, Kurt, thwart the evil Schwang and his alien hordes, I have come to two profound conclusions: BioWare has set a new benchmark for 3D adventure gaming and...I can still play like the devil on no sleep! And play like the devil you must because BioWare's crowning achievement is hard, diverse and, most of all, unique. They have painstakingly executed each character's every scenario, fine-tuning each segment with an emphasis on skill, precision and strategy, proving what can be









achieved when developers believe in themselves and have the player in mind, not the front office. One begets the other, but few developers these days seem to understand this, or, have the luxury to do so.

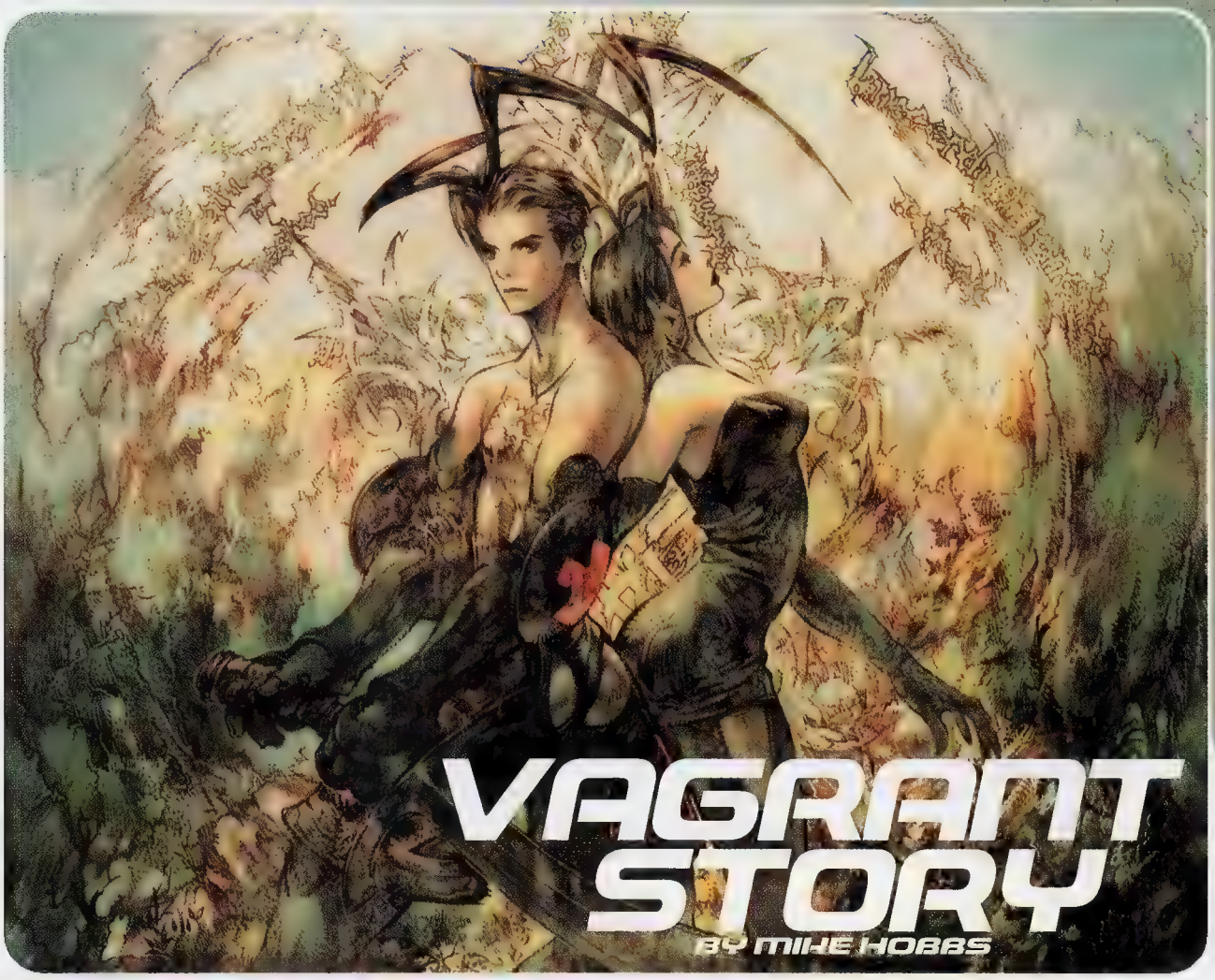
You hope that a sequel can live up to its predecessor, especially if you're a fan, but in this case MDK 2 far overshadows the first MDK. BioWare has emphasized everything that worked, discarded what didn't and added the needed components to bring to light all of Shiny's best innovations while improving dramatically on the original concept. The end result is a melding of manic shooting, intriguing problem solving, and extreme platforming, set among some of the most awe-inspiring and well designed environments ever strapped onto a wireframe. Served up with a side order of humor and a blistering soundtrack, MDK 2 is a must-own title for every Dreamcast owner with ten fingers and the will to persevere (well, you could probably get by with fewer fingers). As the Dreamcast enters its second year of development, with teams like this tapping its most valuable resources, something tells me that we really haven't seen anything yet. **GR**

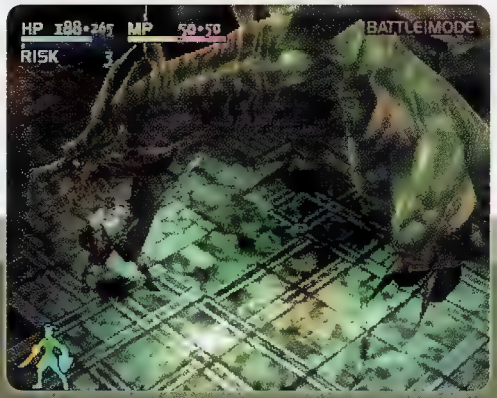
(Pictured above, from the top left) Max's second victim. Guess he messed with the wrong dog; Max's Trevor McFur-style mini-game assault; classic sniper mode and... well, have a look through the big telescope during Max's second mission and...

- EXCELLENT LEVEL DESIGN
- TONS OF DIVERSITY - NEVER A DULL MOMENT
- PUMPING SCORE DRIVES THE ACTION
- YOU'LL NEED SUPER SKILLS TO SEE IT THROUGH

REPUBLIC SAYS... MDK 2 IS A HARDCORE ACTION FAN'S DREAM COME TRUE. ONCE YOU COME TO TERMS WITH THE CONTROLS AND EACH CHARACTER, IT'S A BLAST ALL THE WAY THROUGH.

A-





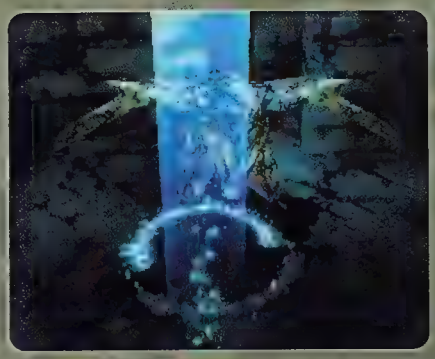
Fantasy, adventure, and combat blended to perfection. The FF Tactics team takes the PS to new heights

As Sony prepares to unleash the PS2 worldwide after a whirlwind of a launch in Japan, that inevitable staleness is beginning to creep into the aura of every new PlayStation release. It becomes more and more difficult to suppress the urge to say, "Imagine how this game would look on PS2." This defeatist attitude may not be fair, but it's one that is thick in the air of new hardware.

Which makes the impression left by Vagrant Story that much more profound. There's no substitute for artistry, whatever the technology, and Square's latest work from the Final Fantasy Tactics team drives this point home in no uncertain terms. There is such a beautifully balanced relationship here between the PlayStation's limitations and the game's visual design that unsavory side effects like pixelation simply melt away into the ether. What you see instead are the artists' intentions, not the fact the PS is only displaying about 3000 polygons per screen. Characters are given detail only where it counts, leading to surprisingly emotive countenances. Environments, though small and self-contained, are rich in atmosphere and detailing, with a marvelous sense of shadow and depth. The real-time cinemas, featuring comic book-style speech bubbles, are as well-directed as those found in Metal Gear Solid and tell a rich, fantastical medieval story.

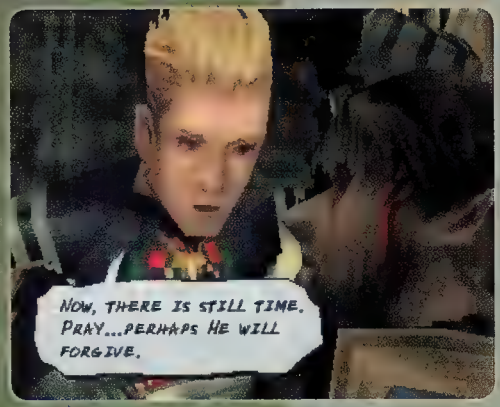
However, it belies the developer's true talents to focus solely on the artistic achievement

VAGRANT STORY (ベイグラントストーリー)



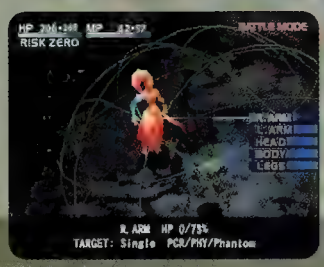
of Vagrant Story. This, remember, is a game born from the minds behind the Ogre Battle series and FF Tactics, and there is a depth and intricacy to the gameplay that creates an experience that is very satisfying and quite original, if not in concept, then certainly in execution. You see, for all of Vagrant Story's elaborate trappings, the bulk of this adventure game focuses on the decimation of beasts, knights, and the undead, but there's undoubtedly high art at work in the combat system. Apart from being able to target enemies' individual body parts, you can unleash multi-hit chain attacks where timely button presses allow attacks to be linked together. These extra hits can poison a foe, or even suck magic and health away from them, depending on how you combine your chain attacks. The game is fun for quite some time, as you can take damage or execute counterstrikes with the game's precise timing system. But using more chains builds up a risk meter, and the higher the risk, the less effective are attacks and the more damaging are enemies' blows, stopping one from chaining his way through every battle. Very clever. And the weapon system is no less rewarding, as the game's myriad arms can be disassembled, with their constituent parts recombined into original wholes. While this leads to a very heavy use of the game's menu system as one is constantly reconfiguring weapons to best attack each foe, it lends a level of strategy to the combat that is highly involving and very enjoyable.

Vagrant Story is one of those rare, complete packages of graphics, sound, and gameplay that only comes around every so often. It's one to be played, and played that is the right hands, there is nothing left in the PS yet. PSM



CALLO MERLOSE

Vagrant Story's highly developed combat system is the heart of the game. When Ashley throws out his targeting sphere, time freezes, and one can target an opponent by body part. During this state, Ashley can also change weapons or unleash magical spells. Combat can be very menu intensive.



- INCREDIBLE REAL-TIME ATMOSPHERE
- COMBAT SYSTEM FULL OF INNOVATION
- VERY WELL DIRECTED CINEMAS
- ALMOST TOO MUCH CONTROL OVER WEAPON DESIGN

REPUBLIC SAYS... VAGRANT STORY REPRESENTS SQUARE WORKING AT THEIR HIGHEST LEVEL. THE FINAL FANTASY TACTICS TEAM HAS DELIVERED ONE OF THE GREAT PS FANTASY ADVENTURES.

A-

NIGHTMARE CREATURES 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON

When a genitalia-deprived son of the devil raises his chainsaw, better chop now and axe questions later

From within the confines of a dank asylum, laden with half-eaten human corpses—food for Dr. Crowley's malformed acolytes—you will lurch, stopping only to mince the slobbering ghouls that would devour you otherwise. You are Herbert Wallace, a tortured, tattered Englishman (and Marilyn Manson look-alike circa Anti-Christ Superstar), and member of The Circle, the occult slayers that vowed to kill Crowley...before you were captured. Fiddled with and tested on for years, Herbert finally escapes the confines of the laboratory, only to be found wandering aimlessly in the streets of London and committed to the asylum where the game begins. Since your escape, Crowley's demons have spread like a plague throughout London, and now a much larger-scale infestation is at hand. Herbert's thirst for revenge, the fuel that drives Nightmare Creatures II, just might end up saving the world. The further you lumber into the game's depths, squinting to see through the darkness, hacking and slaying, dragging Wallace's withered carcass through London and Paris, the more involved you become. By the end of the game you want nothing more than Crowley's severed head on a platter.

The path you take to reach your sanity is infested with a diversity of human and animal-derived freaks that provide much of the gameplay in Creatures II. Outside of a fair dose of exploration and puzzle solving the brunt

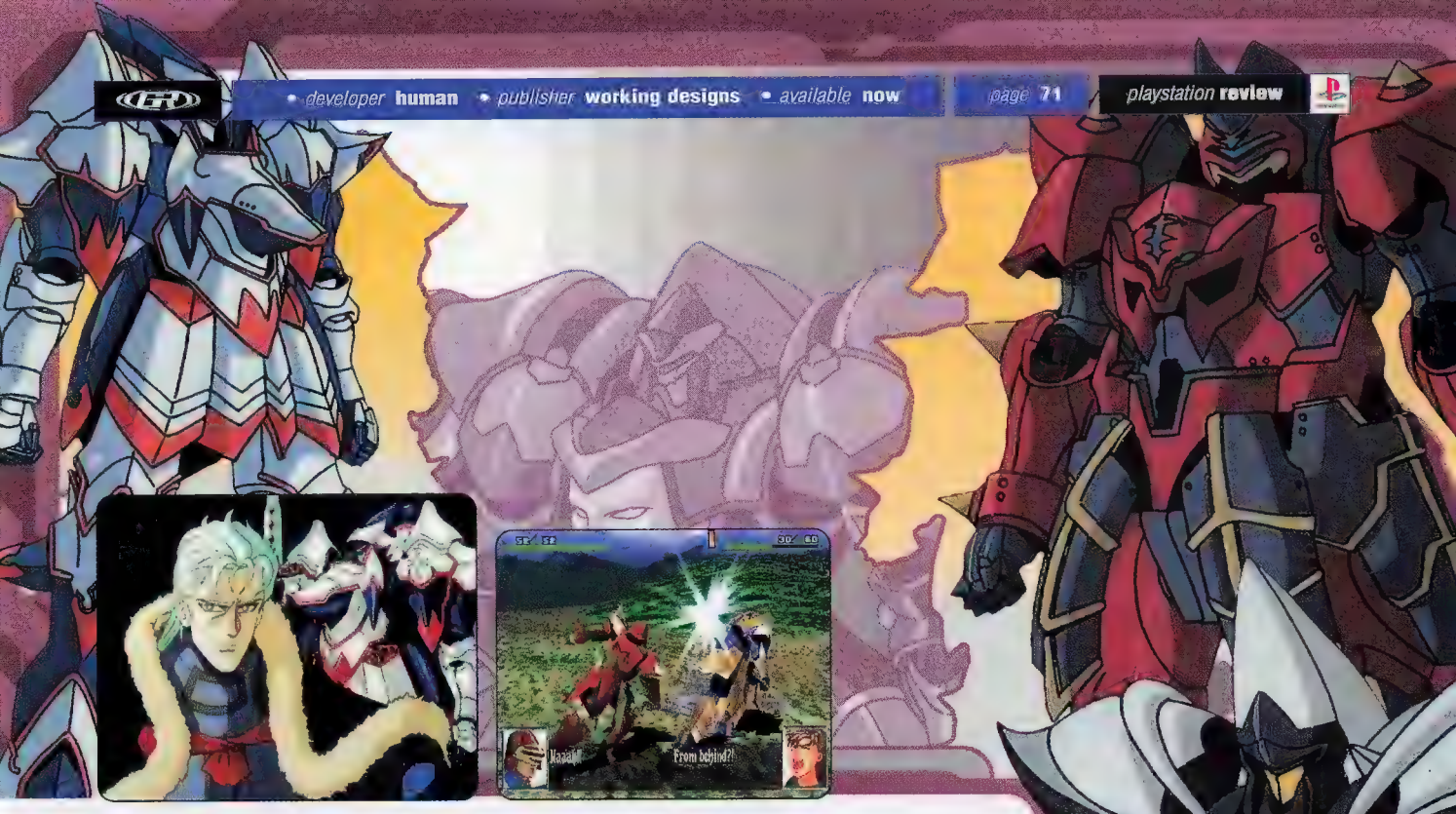
CONTINUED ON PAGE 122 ▸

- DARK, TWISTED, VIOLENT—LOVE IT
- GRITTY SOUNDTRACK FITS LIKE AN OLD DECAYING GLOVE
- CHARACTER DESIGNS ONLY A CORPSE COULD LOVE
- CONTROL'S A BIT SPONGY - SLIGHT COLLISION HANG-UPS

REPUBLIC SRS

A UNIQUE MIXTURE OF FIGHTING, ADVENTURE, AND EXPLORATION, KALISTO HAS ASSEMBLED AN ACTION THRILLER WITH CINEMATIC APPEAL AND ENGAGING GAMEPLAY.

B+



VANGUARD BANDITS

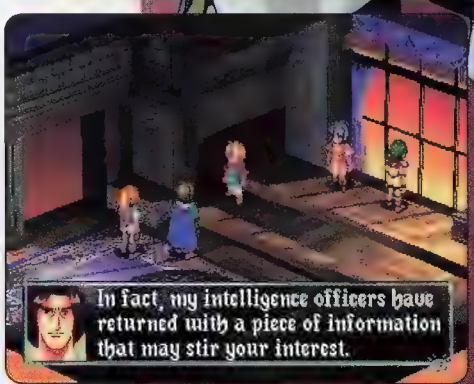
BY J.R. HAUGEN

Gigantic mech suits meet old-school medieval warfare, but Vanguard Bandits is still all about the story

When the element of strategy is mixed with RPG-style gaming, the combination can be remarkably potent. Vanguard Bandits may not be the best example the genre has to offer, but it is a nice addition, with an epic story that spans 56 missions, some for which the game needs to be replayed. On the Continent of Cretia, conflicts are resolved through the use of ATACs (a nod to Human's Turbo CD game Vasteel), large robotic mech suits that are the only remnants of an ancient civilization. You and your father protect the Kingdom from the evil empire, but as events unfold, you learn that good and evil are not as clear-cut as they seem. The story has three big branches to go through, and it takes some skill to diverge from the main one. That, of course, is where the strategy element falls. In battle, you must meticulously plan your attacks and counterattacks (of which there are many types) to make sure the right people get leveled up the right amount with the right special attacks. When attacking an enemy, the screen cuts to a 3D battle between the two ATACs, but fortunately this option can be turned off for the sake of speed. Even with it turned off, combat will take up the bulk of the time spent playing the game. Battles range from massive army-on-army encounters to one-on-one duels to the death.

Graphically, Vanguard Bandits falls short. The occasional anime scene is nice, but most of the time the player is treated to bland environments, open battlefields populated with little else than a few buildings and trees. The characters outside of their ATACs are simply drawn and too close to 16-bit style for comfort. This isn't so much of a drawback, however, as a game of this type banks on its strategy and adventure elements, and in that respect, this game does well.

Vanguard Bandits is a time-intensive game that should keep you glued for a while, especially since there's more to see after you beat it. There is even an ATAC viewer in the main menu where you can look in full detail at all the ATACs you've seen in battle. While not on the level of Final Fantasy Tactics or Vandal Hearts, Vanguard Bandits is sure to win over the strategy/RPG enthusiast. GR



- STORY BRANCHES CREATE REPLAY VALUE
- COOL-LOOKING ATACS AVAILABLE IN 3D VIEWER
- GRAPHICS DON'T EXACTLY SPARKLE
- MAY BE TOO LONG FOR THE CASUAL FAN OF THIS GENRE

REPUBLIC SAYS... VANGUARD BANDITS MAY NOT BE THE GREATEST STRATEGY-RPG YOU CAN GET FOR THE PLAYSTATION, BUT IT'S STILL BETTER THAN AVERAGE.

B

WILD ARMS 2ND IGNITION

BY J.R. HAUGEN

Here comes another amazing RPG courtesy of Sony. WA2 will satisfy your electronic wanderlust

To be truthful, I never really cottoned to the concept of a role-playing game with an "old West" theme, but it worked well in Wild Arms and even better in this greatly improved sequel. Wild Arms 2 is a surprisingly entertaining RPG, standing at the front of the crowded pack with a generous number of interesting gameplay features.

The game takes place hundreds of years after the first Wild Arms, but maintains the general western motif, conveyed through music and scenery. Much like in a Final Fantasy game, though, there is also the presence of high technology in the land of Filgaia to complement the sword and sorcery. The main character is Ashley, a young military recruit who soon discovers he embodies both the demon and the holy spirit that battled in the war of long ago. Joining him are Lilka, the budding enchantress, and Brad, the hard-nosed heavy weapons expert. After getting through their own intro quests, the characters meet up to form an independent anti-terrorist group, and from there the story takes off, throwing in new characters and plot twists at every interval.

Wild Arms 2 innovates in countless ways. It's totally customizable, from the controls and interface settings to your characters' strengths and special abilities. The most notable new feature is the search system. In all RPGs, you go from one town to another on the world map, and you can see them, but in WA2, you have to send out radar-like pulses to make towns and dungeons appear based on information you learn from other people. Another original aspect is the way you can avoid battles. An exclamation mark will sometimes appear over your head before you're attacked, but you can press Circle to cancel it. In battle, your magic ("force") points are gained by attacking and being attacked. These can be used for spells, or for "ARMs," which are special artillery.

2000 is going to be another huge year for RPGs in America, and Wild Arms 2 makes a strong bid to put itself near the front of the pack. GR

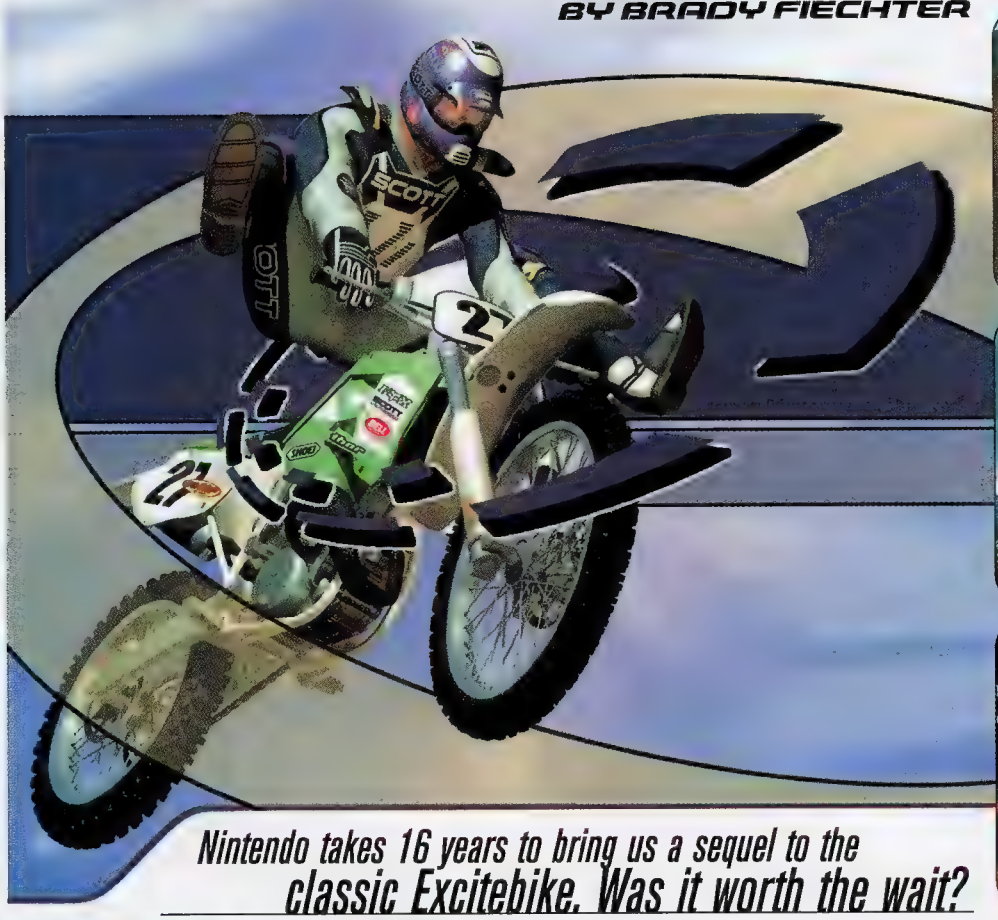
- COLORFUL HI-RES GRAPHICS POPULATE THE ENVIRONMENTS
- TAILOR EVERYTHING TO YOUR TASTES
- VIEW CARDS OF THE 300+ MONSTERS YOU FIGHT
- STORY BORROWS TOO MUCH FROM RPG TRADITION

REPUBLIC SAYS... There's just too many RPGs on the market these days, but Wild Arms 2 stands above the rest with plenty of interesting gameplay elements.

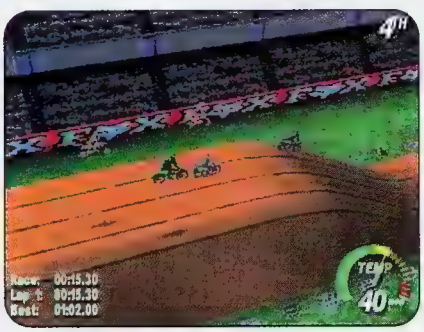
B+

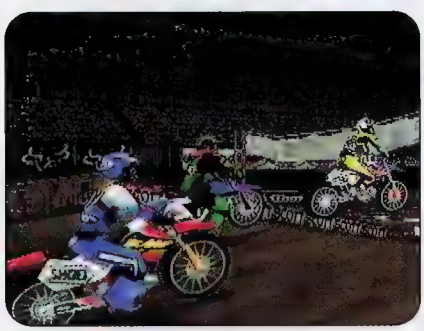
EXCITEBIKE 64

BY BRADY FIECHTER



Nintendo takes 16 years to bring us a sequel to the classic Excitebike. Was it worth the wait?





To call Excitebike 64 a sequel is a bit misleading. The only thing this game really shares with Nintendo's 16-year-old classic is a great name, one that will no doubt draw an audience not normally interested in a motocross racing game.

The spirit and feel of Excitebike is a distant memory, made even more apparent as you uncover the game as a hidden bonus and get hooked, once again, on the ingeniously simple gameplay. But this in no way means Excitebike 64 is anything less than a finely crafted motocross game. It's huge fun, mixing a heavy emphasis of sim elements with just enough exaggerated play mechanics and physics to give it an extra charge.

The racing takes place across 20 impressive courses that span the globe, from the rain-soaked outdoor countryside of Europe to the winding indoor track in L.A. Moving up through the ranks of bronze, silver, gold and platinum classes, you'll need to rely on a number of strategies that are unique to Excitebike 64's brand of racing. The key to winning is mastering the powerstroke, a turbo system that gives your bike an extra boost when properly executed at the apex of a jump. And like in the first Excitebike, engines are always on the verge of redlining, requiring a constant eye on the temperature gauge.

While some racing games draw their appeal from exhilarating speed and white-knuckle confrontations, Excitebike 64 relies on a demanding grasp of the racing line over the many sequences of bumps and jumps. Having to deal with the aggressive bikes—additional bikes are randomly dumped into the competition from the sidelines to continually keep opponents in your face—control the jumps, and keep a consistent speed through the course is a balancing act most motocross games seem unable to manage, but here, finally, is a motocross game that hits the gameplay target dead center.

Also right on the mark is the look of the game, aided by excellent rider animations and detailed courses that can bare little complaints when compared to the flimsy competition. In fact, forget the competition entirely. Excitebike 64 is the only way to ride. **GR**

- NICE VARIETY OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR TRACKS
- GREAT MULTIPLAYER EXTRAS, LIKE SOCCER MATCHES
- GOOD MIX OF ARCADE-STYLE PLAY AND MOTOCROSS SIM
- GREAT-LOOKING ENVIRONMENTS

REPUBLIC SAYS... WITH A TRACK EDITOR, MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS, A LARGE SELECTION OF TRACKS, IMPRESSIVE GRAPHICS AND EXCITING RACING, EXCITEBIKE 64 IS THE COMPLETE PACKAGE.

A-

PERFECT DARK

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Perfect Dark is better than GoldenEye. What else do you want to know?

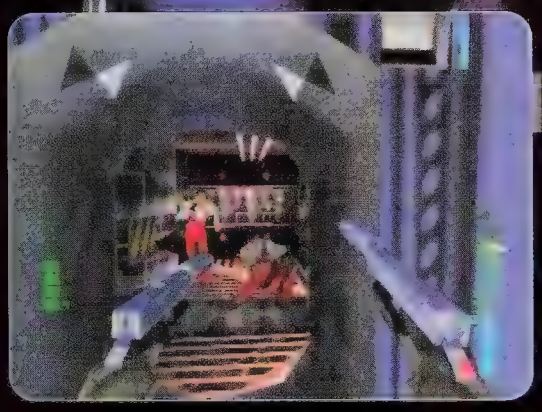
How about that it's one of the most ferociously intense first-person shooters ever. Or that it's a visual triumph on N64, endlessly inspired and remarkably structured. Or that it takes standard design ingredients and weaves in layers of invention.

It may feel and play somewhat like GoldenEye, but this sequel to Rare's classic is in many ways a new, entirely different monster. This time out, you assume the secret-agent role of neophyte Joanna Dark, who is under the employ of the Carrington Institute, a private organization whose current project is to thwart the unscrupulous dataDyne Corporation and a belligerent race of aliens known as the Skeedar. Dropping you into intriguing environments of early-21st century Earth, the complex story entertainingly unspools through voiced cinemas that tightly glue together the levels. Because Perfect Dark hinges on mission-based gameplay—sabotage hi-tech devices, plant explosives, make escorts, infiltrate bases via disguise—its skilled use of story becomes even more valuable, yet another powerful tool that buries you in the game's universe.

The true glory of this game is in the enemy confrontations. The opposition displays a remarkable depth of intelligence and reaction, diving away from a weapons lock, ducking and fleeing, alerting other guards, stealing your weapons. When shot, an enemy won't just fall to the ground, he'll crumple, stumble, grasp a wound, cry out with profanity (the game is rated M for a reason). So convincing are the animation routines that the enemy seems to be truly alive and aware, not simply dropped into the game as a mechanical line of defense. Even the littlest touches like a sniper leaving a tower, running toward your position and dropping to the ground to take a shot are crucial to the game's effect.

The way the action is staged is at times brilliant. Take the cloaked soldiers who attack in packs. They sneak through the shadows, spraying your position with gunfire upon decloaking, again disappearing to move to another position. Tracking their movements, finding a safe spot, and waiting for the right moment to return fire is a pulse-pounding rush.

Equally exhilarating are the more surreptitious confrontations that require calculated precision shots, like the opening to the incredible villa stage, where you are required to protect a hostage negotiator by



picking off the terrorists positioned far below your sniping perch. And then there are the head shots. Especially satisfying are the ones delivered through glass ports in doors to unsuspecting guards (miss and he'll stumble to an alarm, and you're screwed), or from a crawl space above.

Perfect Dark offers one great moment after another, but when the adrenaline drops on the one-player game, the next hit comes from the multiplayer chaos. GoldenEye's multiplayer arena was a place for awesome competition, but Perfect Dark leaps far ahead of it with an enormously ambitious list of options, from tracking stats to 13 original arenas to the ability to tackle the main stages of the game with a friend playing as partner or foe. In deathmatches, teams can be formed to carry out an array of objectives, and when it comes down to every man for himself in a classic battle for most kills, Perfect Dark is at its best: When you first discover the combat boost, an ingenious power-up that locks everyone into slow motion, new meaning is given to the word "intense."

In what's been far too long in coming, computer resistance is finally dumped into the action, and here you will find what Rare calls "simulants" doing battle with the best of them. Up to eight of these computer opponents can be placed into the fray, and they have different sets of personalities: Revenge targets its last killer with impunity; Dark is a supremely skilled killing machine; Vendetta picks a random player at the beginning of the match and continually shadows them. And you thought GoldenEye was good. GR

- AWESOME DEATH ANIMATIONS; ACTUALLY ADDS TO THE GAMEPLAY
- RICH VISUALS, INSPIRED SETTINGS, GREAT MUSIC
- LEVEL DESIGN AT TIMES BRILLIANT
- TOO BAD THE FRAME RATE ISN'T BETTER

REPUBLIC SAYS... BOTTOM LINE: THIS IS WHAT A SEQUEL SHOULD BE. THE EXTRAS IN THE GAME ARE BEYOND WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT.

A

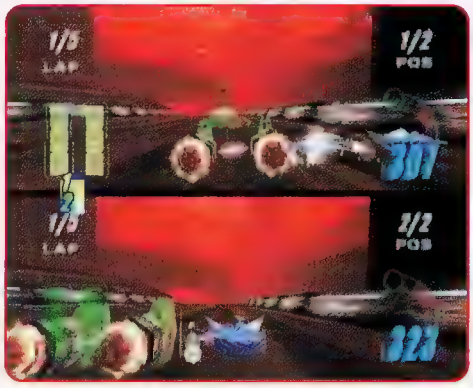
0 31441 07950

STAR WARS EPISODE ONE: RACER

review by m. hobbs • dev/pub: lucasarts • avail: now

B-

The Dreamcast version of Episode One Racer suffers from what I like to call "lowest common denominator syndrome." This occurs when a game is designed for multiple platforms, and instead of maxing out each particular hardware, developers find a middle ground allowing for easy conversion. In the case of Racer, this middle ground was the N64, and in terms of complexity, the PC, Mac, and now Dreamcast version all harbor visually identical polygon counts. One can't chide developers too strongly for this, as it obviously makes good economical sense, but it is disappointing when the differences between the N64 and DC versions are slight where they should be great. Even so, Racer remains one of the more successful Episode One games, and low-end polygon count withstanding, the amazing speed, perfect control, and well-implemented theme carry over intact to the Dreamcast version, which also boasts the CG track intros from the Mac and PC and a great two-player split-screen.



A couple of dynamic flaws keep Racer out of the realm of something like Wipeout, however. For starters, many of the courses are simply too long. Often, one can take first position on the opening lap, and the remaining two laps can take up to seven minutes to complete—an absolute eternity where there is little to do but steer and look at the scenery, nice though it may be. LucasArts should have taken a cue from classics like Ridge Racer and Wipeout, both of which keep laps short and intense. And like other iterations of Racer, the Pod upgrade system is clumsy and not very intuitive.

N64 owners expecting a vastly upgraded translation will be disappointed with Star Wars Episode One: Racer, as there's not much over an increase in resolution to differentiate the two versions. But for first timers, the game should come across fairly well, even if it could use a little more focus in its course design. GR

KIRBY 64

review by m. hobbs • dev: hal laboratory • pub: nintendo • avail: now

B-

After the long-departed Kirby's Air Ride, we were beginning to wonder if the N64 would get a Kirby game. Well, it finally has, and lo and behold, it's cute, simple, and very easy.

Kirby 64 can be most easily compared to a game like Namco's Klonoa, in that it's a 2.5D action/platformer with slightly sluggish control. Unfortunately for N64 owners, however, Klonoa is a far richer and better-looking game, as Kirby makes do with very simple environments and unflatteringly blurry graphics. But the game is certainly fun, at least for those who can get over playing as a little pink ball with a face.

Those familiar with the Game Boy Kirby or Super Smash Brothers will instantly feel at home here, as Kirby's skill of sucking up enemies and acquiring new attacks is on instant display. And by combining different enemies, Kirby can learn a large number of moves, becoming a spiked ball of death or even a raging fireball. Finding the best set of skills for each area is key, though the game's relative ease allows one to progress with just about any iteration of Kirby.

With plenty of levels and all sorts of bosses to fight, Kirby 64 is a relaxing, old-fashioned game that probably would have come across much better a couple of years ago. As is, it's a refreshing page from the past for those looking for a lightly taxing old-school action/platformer. GR

4-WHEEL THUNDER

review by b. fiechter • **dev:** kalisto • **pub:** midway • **avail:** now

D+

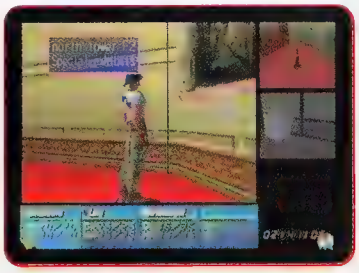
Curiously flawed and horribly mishandled, this once promising arcade racing game is now a frustrating and sloppy addition to Midway's deflated Thunder series. To even call 4-Wheel Thunder a racing game is a disservice to the genre it feebly tries to occupy. There is no racing going on, but rather a search for shortcuts and boosts. The game's greatest misstep is placing you at the starting line while the other 11 trucks, buggies, quads and jeeps start with as much as a half-lap lead, and when you gradually begin to make a pass up to the front, you'll find that there is virtually no resistance by any competitor, just as long as you have a booster charge. If the goal of the game were to chase a single moving dot to the finish line, its intensity would remain the same. It's fast, looks great, and is simple to pick up, but 4-Wheel Thunder's vapid gameplay will send you spiralling into mental shutdown. GR

I-SPY: OPERATION ESPIONAGE

review by j.r. haugen • **dev:** ufo • **pub:** nec • **avail:** now

C-

Originality can be a double-edged sword, because sometimes you get such originality as Parappa the Rapper, and other times you get, well, I-Spy: Operation Espionage. It feels awkward to even call this a game, because most of the time you're just watching your agents go from point A to point B; there's not much action to speak of. The premise of the game is that you are a Mission: Impossible-type spy organization that is hired out to tamper with and steal things. You pick three to four agents out of a pool of about seven, each with their own abilities, and put their skills to the test. If one guy is good at locks, you have him unlock the doors, and so on. Occasionally a guard will get in your way, but other than that, the play is extremely monotonous. What it comes down to is getting your timing right with the correct characters, which means each mission will need to be replayed a few times to nail it down. Additionally, despite the game's amazing art, the graphics are hardly Dreamcast quality, with regrettably lackluster environments. Only play this game if you're up for a serious challenge, in more ways than one. GR



NEED FOR SPEED: PORSCHE UNLEASHED

review by e. fear • **dev/pub:** electronic arts • **avail:** now

PlayStation C+

This game could have been titled NFS: Porsche Sunday Drive. Every Porsche under the sun is waiting for you to unlock and take for a spin, but you'll have to under go hours of rigorous racing to do so.

Ultimately you'll find a showroom full of Porsches—from the 356 of the '50s, the 914 of the early '70s, and the 928 and 944 of the '80s, to Bill Gate's own 959, along with every flavor of 911 (including GT3, GT2 and GT1 race variants). The performance difference between the models is well-simulated: the 356 is a weekend cruiser and, on the other extreme, the 917 shorttail racer is a nearly unmanageable beast. Presenting the cars in three eras—the '50s and early '60s, late '60s through the '80s, and the modern cars—not only helps the balance but serves as a history lesson of Porsche's development. And while there's no upgrade system for the vehicles (as in High Stakes), there is a damage system that keeps track of abuse and allows you to fix these things before each race or suffer the performance and handling consequences.

So what's wrong? First off, the speedo might say 100 mph, but it sure feels like about 45. For a game based on some of the most lusted-after high-performance machines on the planet, this inhibits the believability of the power of the cars. And the AI isn't really set to racing; most of the opponents are left in the dust, with an occasional challenger in the later races.

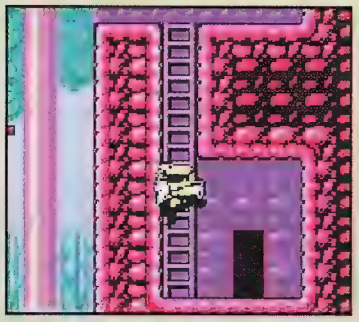
If you're a hardcore racing fan, or looking for something to supplant Gran Turismo 2, keep on looking. But if you're looking for an excuse to cruise a Porsche, this is worth checking out. GR

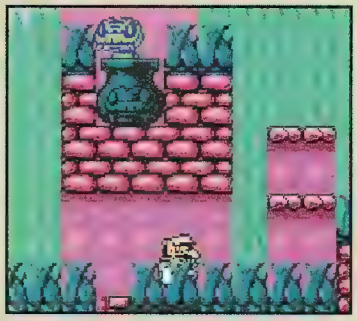
PORTABLE GAMING ANALYSIS GAMES MOBILIZED

wario land 2 dev/pub: nintendo • avail: now reviewed by d. halverson

There's nothing quite as refreshing as a first-party Nintendo game, especially when it's in the Mario universe. If you thought Wario Land was great, wait till you plug this puppy into your Game Boy Color. Now made exclusively for the GB Color, Wario is ready for his swan song before he makes the trip to the GB Advance, which could save 2D gaming as we know it, or in some cases, not.

Sheer 2D bliss in the Mario tradition, Wario Land 2 exhibits all of the intellectual 2D of the original, and then some. Starting out, Wario can do little more than run and jump, but, moving about on the huge overworld map that gradually opens up, as he progresses by by finding colored keys, opening the corresponding chests and then heading for the corresponding exit, Wario is granted new techniques. Like all of the great Nintendo side scrollers, you're constantly passing by things you can't obtain and levels you can't reach. As Wario attains his new skills you'll re-visit each of the 24 areas (always ask "The Hidden Figure" who hired you where to go next), which open up four-fold, making for a humongous overall adventure. The gameplay, heavily laced with every 2D pay mechanic in the book, from jumping to floating to swimming, is everything you've come to expect from Nintendo, and the mini-games—2D golf as only the puckish Wario could dish out—are not only integral but a real hoot as well. Graphically Wario Land 2 has a rich, sharp look to it (unless you're using some budget magnifier instead of a Worm Light). I was a bit put off by the absence of parallax but otherwise this is certainly one of the best-looking games on the system. The music, too, is of good quality, in terms of the beeps and bleeps the GBC produces. While we all wait for the imminent arrival of the next Nintendo handheld, games like Wario Land 2 help the time pass ever so gracefully. **A-**



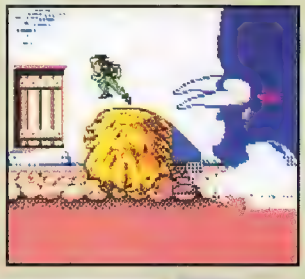


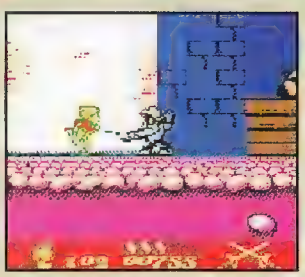
last blade: beyond the destiny dev/pub: snk • avail: spring reviewed by chris hoffman

If there's one thing SNK is known for, it's solid 2D fighting games. Last Blade: Beyond the Destiny carries on that tradition as a weapons-based fighter that plays much like Samurai Shodown. Each of the game's nine immediately selectable characters uses some sort of weapon, be it a sword, bo staff, or (would you believe) a turtle with which they dispatch their enemies. Though the action is a bit slower than your average fighting game, each character has plenty of flashy special moves and the graphics are excellent and detailed. The best part, though, is the numerous modes like story, time trials, survival, and two mini-games, plus a massive gallery of goodies to unlock. Last Blade has high replay and fun fighting. **B**

road to el dorado dev: planet interactive • pub: ubi soft • avail: now reviewed by dave halverson

After *Gold and Glory: The Road to El Dorado*'s weak showing at the box office (compared to Dreamwork's last animated epic, *The Prince of Egypt*), the games based on the movie should not be judged accordingly, if for no other reason than the fact that they don't stop dead in their tracks so that we can sit through some embarrassing music designed to stop 6 year olds from wiggling in their seats. The GB Color game is in the capable hands of Ubi Soft (via developer Planet Interactive), who have crafted an adventure that borrows from David Perry's classic Aladdin for the Genesis. After choosing either Tulio or Miguel, you'll have at the streets of The Spanish Village and from there follow the chronology of the movie religiously in a classic 2D gameplay environment. Each character wields a sword to deal with enemies, and besides the usual run-and-jump formula, the duo can grab onto ledges and hoist themselves up, adding a Prince of Persia-like mechanic to the proceedings. There's also a nice bit of sprite scaling as they make their way into doorways, openings in the jungle, etc. Especially notable are the character's animation routines, which are surprisingly fluid for a GBC game, the vastness of the environments, and the music, which is good considering the hardware. Things to tend to get monotonous as the gameplay rarely changes, and it is on the short side, but overall El Dorado is one of the better side scrollers available for the GB Color. Still no parallax, though. **C+**





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It is far from being the game Crave first released shots of. You remember them: player models that appeared to push two or three thousand polys inside a level that looked to be a manipulated version of Chicago's Municipal Skate Park. But Pro Skater for the Dreamcast still manages to impress.

The Dreamcast version of Pro Skater is exactly the same game many of you intimately know on the PlayStation. Other than some cosmetic touch-ups that I'll get into a bit later, Crave has done an admirable job keeping the integrity of what Neversoft crafted. There are no new levels, no reconfigured levels, not even an added ramp or rail in that sweet spot you wished was one, but with the original formula so potent, change just wasn't necessary.

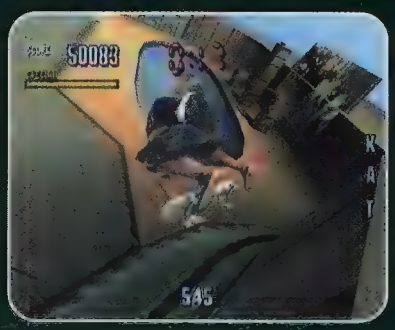
Player models and environments are in beautiful hi-res and have gotten a noticeable allowance in extra polys. The skaters have better definition, lending a more realistic look. Even the skateboards have gone from being simple blocks to actual 3D reproductions. On top of the extra polys, skaters will also run through a series of ending animations when the clock expires. Skaters will wave, pose, and even celebrate at the end of each run. Basically, Crave fleshed out the existing animation routines.

As far as the levels go, they look great and, better yet, move at a comfortable 30 frames—which is adequate, but by no means pushes the Dreamcast hardware in any way. In fact, the levels are rather small and should be able to be displayed without any draw-in, especially if only running at 30 frames. Instead, Crave focused their attention on rounding out the ramps and pools, adding some extra polys to complement the new textures.

Extensive lighting effects have been tailored throughout the indoor courses, while bushes and trees fill the once-empty planters during the outdoor courses. Other little touches include more defining transparencies in windows and, in some cases, the ability to see through them: storefronts in the Minneapolis level showcase multiple televisions that display the current video running on the billboard screens. Some additions are so subtle, you might not even notice while you whiz by scouting the next spot to hit.

Which now leads me to control. The game controls great with the analog, but I have become accustomed to using and actually prefer the digital pad; it helps me execute the exact move I want, especially since buttons perform the basic function, like an ollie trick, grab or grind. The direction you hold while tapping one of these buttons will result in a variety of moves you need to integrate into your line, and it is here is that the inaccuracy of the analog controller can lead to repeated and unwanted moves.

The word "port" has come to hold negative connotations—why I am not sure. I see nothing wrong extending the likes of something special to different consoles. It only helps the market and reaches people who otherwise might not be able to experience a particular game. The success of Pro Skater will without a doubt stretch to the Dreamcast, and for some, will be the reason to buy a Dreamcast-even if the game is a port. The only thing missing from the review copy Crave sent is the four-player mode. So I cannot comment on the effectiveness, frame rate or fun factor that it may have. Even if it is a horrific extra, there is enough to the existing game that it wouldn't change my opinion: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater is a superb achievement—on any system. GR



gamers' republic sports

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

developer: crave publisher: crave available: may

B+

Stilted for reasons unknown, Striker Pro 2000 slips a few months from its initial release list and yet ultimately looks and plays remarkably like the preview code we had back in December. This is, however, not a bad thing: Rage has done a nice job keeping the frame rate from choking up and delivers sharp images with natural-looking animations. The default camera seems to have been pulled back a bit, and the CPU has definitely been training during the past few months: it will run authentic play patterns and defensive strategies depending on score deficit and time left during a game. This results in multiple passes not only to move the ball down field, but also to position nearby teammates for a likely goal. While playing it is a bit harder to recognize these patterns since you are focused on keeping up with the action, but when watching a game play out it is interesting to see the approach and intelligence the CPU displays.

I am not afraid to admit I know little about the current state of soccer and which teams are rivals. If I did, though, this game would be about be the best thing I could hope for in a soccer experience. There are 70-plus teams to command, complete with editing abilities—you set specific divisions, change uniform colors and even the name of the team. On top of this, playing conditions can be altered to best fit the situation you want to brave. Set up nighttime games with rain, shuffle through a game played in the snow; you can even tweak the penalties and rules to make the game as hypersensitive or forgiving as you like.

Play mechanics are simplistic and help anyone who wants to enjoy a game with little confusion or frustration. Separate buttons are mapped for passing, sprinting and shooting. Learning how to keep up when on defense is tricky and will require the most time adjusting when you pick the game up for the first go-round. The CPU moves the ball efficiently and effectively, which it should. But the game is scripted to highlight your closest man to the ball. This causes quick bursts of control of a player before the scripted routine regains control and alternates to another player.

Complementing the gorgeous visuals is equally impressive commentary. Provided by a collection of three commentators, Striker Pro 2000 has the genuine sound of an international sports broadcast. The opinions and observations are triggered and often a repeated sequence, but they're still very energetic and fitting.

The game is tight. It has everything from the simple interface and modification screens to the look and feel of a bona fide soccer game. There isn't anything different or innovative in play mechanics, which ultimately and unintentionally make the game handle like others already on the market. That said, it is hard to state whether this is a bad or good thing. I guess it is bad because one's interest may die after only a short while, since the game doesn't push the player to learn new techniques. And good because the simple commands keep the game moving.

Not since the days of the Genesis has a Sega system been able to deliver highly playable replications of a sport. Striker Pro 2000 helps to solidify the growing library of first-generation games and showcase the ability of the Dreamcast. GR

gamers' republic sports

STRIKER PRO 2000

developer: rage publisher: infogrames available: may

B+

Probably the best elements of Kurt Warner's Arena Football Unleashed that can't be found in any of Midway's NFL Blitz games are the after-play shenanigans performed on a downed player: repeatedly stomping on his body with both your feet, throwing him into the wall, picking him up by the neck and shaking him around before throwing him to the ground, and getting him in a headlock and repeatedly punching him in the face. The NFL didn't approve of those types of moves in its Blitz-licensed games.

This game is pretty much NFL Blitz with unique Arena Football specifics: a short, 50-yard field; 85-feet wide; only a couple feet between the bleacher walls and the sidelines; punting is illegal; only six players per team; and there are two nets on both sides of the goal posts and if the ball hits them and bounces back into play, it's a live ball.

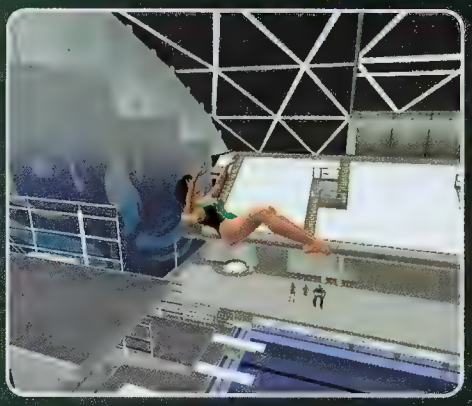
All of the AFL teams are included, four players can play and there is a cool option to play a tournament mode with single, double and best-two-out-of-three elimination, making it a good party game. There's a pretty good selection of offensive and defensive plays, and as with the other Blitz titles, the game moves at a pretty quick pace, probably quicker, satiating those quick gaming fixes. But the graphics here aren't very attractive—they looked rushed—and the sound is standard Blitz fare. In fact, this is essentially a recycled game of Blitz. If you're an arena league fan, go ahead and pick it up, if not, well then, don't bother. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

ARENA FOOTBALL UNLEASHED

developer/publisher: midway available: spring

C+



Being developed by Attention to Detail, the team responsible for the manic techno racer, Rollcage, Sydney 2000 is set to release in August on several systems: Dreamcast, PC, PlayStation, N64, and GBC. Obviously these screens are from the DC version, but Sydney 2000 is looking impressive on all the systems. As for the gameplay, while we have yet to see or hear exactly what type of controls are to be involved (hopefully none of the frantic button mashing or un-user-friendly schemes so prevalent in past efforts), we do have the lowdown on what kinds of games will be included.

Sydney 2000 will include play for four (N64, DC) to eight people (PC via LAN, PS) in the following events: 100m Sprint, 110m Hurdles, Hammer Toss, Javelin Throw, Triple Jump, High Jump, 100m Freestyle Swimming, Olympic Sprint Cycling, Skeet Shooting, Super Heavyweight Weight Lifting, 10m Platform Diving and Kayak K1 Slalom.

There will be a variety of modes to chose from: single player, multiplayer, arcade, head-to-head, coaching and Olympic. The authentic environments will include six Sydney 2000 Olympic game locations and 18 pre-Olympic areas. Some of the finer touches will include real-time facial expressions, variable breathing rates, muscle bulging (let's see that on the GBC) and a TV-style presentation with more than 600 camera positions.

If the gameplay mechanics can come anywhere near to the quality of these images, then we're in for quite a treat. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

SYDNEY 2000

developer: attention to detail publisher: eidos available: august

The NFL GameDay franchise is on its sixth title, one for each year of the PlayStation's existence. Until GameDay arrived, EA's Madden series was the top pigskin game in town. Then 989 (actually U.S. Gold) came along and the rest is history.

NFL GameDay 2001 may quite possibly be the last on the system, as Sony has taken 989 Sports in-house and may move them all to PS2 development. But until that time, GameDay 2001 looks to satisfy. Due out in August, the game will feature improved player models (each scaled to the actual height, weight and body style of the real players), photo-realistic stadium models, and new character animations such as sideline tip-toe catches and upending tackles. The game includes more than 200 new motion-captured moves.

The realism players have come to expect from the series will be included, as the playbook was culled from 55 NFL players, and 17 pros helped design the CPU's AI.

With Sega's own NFL franchise creating new waves in the industry, Sony's got their work cut out for them. We'll soon see what they answer with. GR

gamers' republic sports

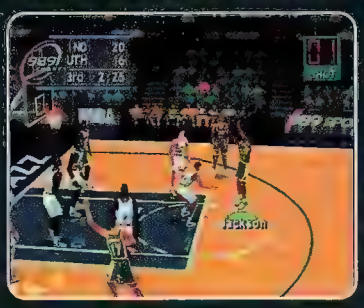
NFL GAMEDAY 2001

developer: 989 sports publisher: electronic arts available: aug

With the 1999-2000 NBA playoffs gearing up as of this writing, the mere thought of the start of the next NBA season is out of the question. But yet with the information and the couple of screens Sony sent to us for NBA ShootOut 2001, look to the future we must.

As with the football genre, Dreamcast's NBA2K has dented the sturdy coat of armor that the PlayStation has worn so valiantly when competing for the sports system title. But there's a reason why ShootOut is on its fifth release. The games have come to be one of the premier franchises in video game hoops. Touting one of the best five-on-five engines in the industry and with its eight-player option, ShootOut is one of the ultimate console multiplayer experiences.

NBA ShootOut 2001 adds the ability for players to draft rookies and build them into NBA superstars. Joining 989's Touch Shooting mechanism of last year is the Touch Dribbling system, to quicken the pace of the game. New player models and superstar player animations have also been incorporated, as has a new TV-style format. But will it all be good enough to keep hoop fans on the PS? GR



gamers' republic sports

NBA SHOOTOUT 2001

developer: 989 sports publisher: sony available: november

Like basketball, hockey starts at the end of one year and finishes in the beginning of the next year, so the 2001 moniker again rears its head. (Which makes me wonder, why all the recently released baseball games end with 2001?) And like 989's football franchise, NHL Face-Off is hitting its sixth title (989's ShootOut missed release in 1998) with a somewhat rocky history compared to EA's NHL series. But last year's effort was an improvement over NHL '99, and included some of the best audio in sports-game history.

Scheduled for a September release, NHL Face Off 2001 looks to build upon the ice hockey franchise with the addition of an enhanced line manager and the inclusion of four new play modes: Tournament, ShootOut, Practice and Draft. The title will also include the new teams slated to join the NHL in the 2000-2001 season: the Minnesota Wild and the Columbus Blue Jackets.

We hope to get a look at this and all of the 989 Sports titles at the E3 show in May. GR

gamers' republic sports

NHL FACE OFF 2001

developer: 989 sports publisher: sony available: september

Back with what appears to be a new strategy is NFL Quarterback Club 2001 from Acclaim. Last year, Acclaim made the mistake of trying to brand their sports line on the Dreamcast, which ended up only helping drive home how amazing Sega's own sports game are.

This year, Acclaim has taken the dignified move and will create the Dreamcast version with specific attributes to take advantage of the system. This will hopefully result in 60 frames, extra and smoother animations, and better overall gameplay.

From the current look of the game, it still falls short in visuals and complex player models. But according to the press document the whole stadium including players will be highly detailed and strung with ambient actions. GR

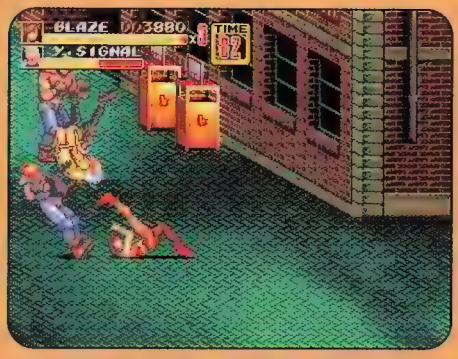
gamers' republic sports

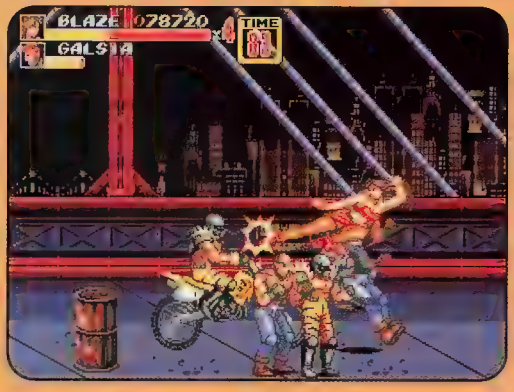
NFL QBC 2001

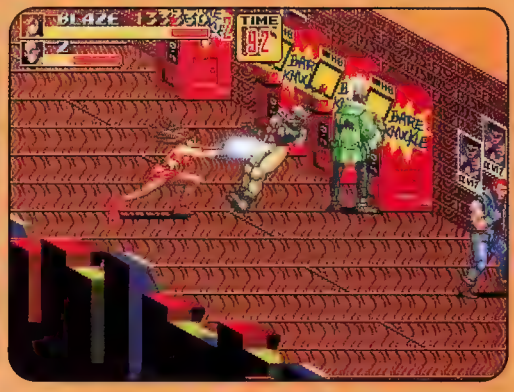
dev: acclaim austin/high voltage pub: acclaim available: august

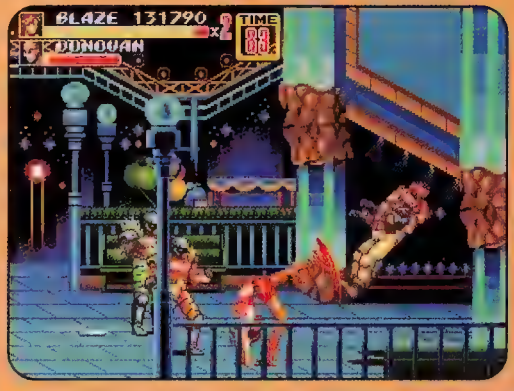
STREETS OF RAGE: SERIES

[publisher] sega
[genre] action
[system] genesis
[year] 1992









Back in the 16-bit era, which wasn't so long ago, we went by an entirely different set of rules pertaining to the technology of video games. Where there's now clipping, we complained of flicker; stuttered frame rates, slow down; and chunky polygons, small, poorly animated sprites. We also had to contend with something we barely think about these days—the repetitive porn music that many a cartridge game could dish out, the result of too little memory reserves after the graphics and effects gobbled it all up. There were those games, though, that got it all right, and Streets of Rage was one of them.

The industry standard at the time was Capcom's Final Fight, which appeared sans luscious babes on the mighty SNES (a whole other story). It seemed no one would topple the king, until Yuzo Koshiro and Sega of Japan got together and blew it out of the water with Streets of Rage. Although the Genesis displayed far fewer colors than the SNES (64 as opposed to 256), Rage looked better, and even though the SNES had a far superior sound chip, Streets of Rage sounded better. Yuzo Koshiro worked magic with the Z-80 sound chip and delivered the first techno soundtrack to 16-bit. It would mark the beginning of the 16-bit music wars.

Streets had big, nicely animated sprites, clever use of parallax, diverse levels laden with fresh obstacles, and a babe in tight red leather to go with the then- staple male duo, which always included one faster and one stronger. Streets of Rage 2 took things a step further, adding the first in-line skater to the beat-'em-up trade (DJ Boy used conventional roller skates) complete with a host of grabbing and combo moves previously unseen in the genre, and some of the coolest backgrounds ever. The Streets of rage 2 soundtrack stands as one of the Genesis' best ever. The final Streets of Rage on 16-bit (we firmly believe the series will continue on Dreamcast), Streets of Rage 3 added further to the roster and features with 6 characters and 6-button control. It also stirred up some controversy here at home. The Japanese original (Streets was known as Bare Knuckle in Japan) featured a flaming homosexual as the first boss. I mean, this guy was on fire. Of course, he never saw the light of day here in the States. An indelible part of beat-'em-up lore, Streets of Rage is a true GRkive. —Dave Halverson

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WORLD REPUBLIC

[i] **World Republic opens this month with an interview with Gust, developers of the PS2's first futuristic racer, Hresvelgr. We've also got what will certainly be the last review of a new Saturn game in Capcom's Final Fight Revenge, and it's a stinker. And be sure to check out our take on KOF '99, Gradius III&IV, DrumMania, Fantavision, and more for PS2.**

World Republic Interview • developer **gust** • publisher **gust** • available in japan **may**

GUST: HRESVELGR

PS2

Gust is known in Japan for their successful RPG Marie's Atelier, a quirky and rather simplistic game with a female following that outnumbers males 5 to 1. Now their collective eye is focusing on the male-dominated market with the future release of a PlayStation 2 racing game called Hresvelgr. While in Japan for TGS, GR sat down with the company for an exclusive interview.

Gust's Shinichi Yoshiike, left, and Kae Matsubayashi, right.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO CREATE A RACING GAME FOR PS2?

Gust: Well, first of all, as you know we have been creating RPGs such as Marie's Atelier for PS, and I wanted to create something that would be graphically intriguing, yet fun. Also, I wanted to achieve something different and challenging as well. It is somewhat easy to create RPGs—I mean, one like Marie's Atelier for PS—and if I make a sequel to Marie's Atelier or Ellie's Atelier, there is no point in creating the game for PS2 with its awesome graphic power. It would be sort of a waste to develop our RPG titles for PS2; why spend the time creating something that can be played on PS, don't you think? The spec of PS is enough for what we have done with our RPGs. Because I wanted to maximize or utilize the power of PS2, a racing game came into my mind.

GR: WHEN DID YOU FINISH CONCEPTUALIZING AND PLANNING AND START THE ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAME? HOW CLOSE TO COMPLETION IS IT?

Gust: I finished all the planning by summer last year and started developing the game in September. It has been quite a busy time. I have not slept much these days [smiles]. I think about 90% of the game is done. Currently, we are working on what to put on the CD-ROM, meaning music and FMV.

GR: WHERE DID THE NAME HRESVELGR COME FROM?

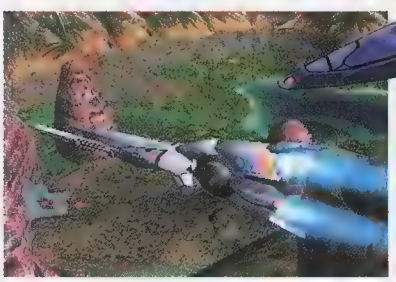
Gust: It is based on a name from Northern European Mythology. It basically means Phoenix.

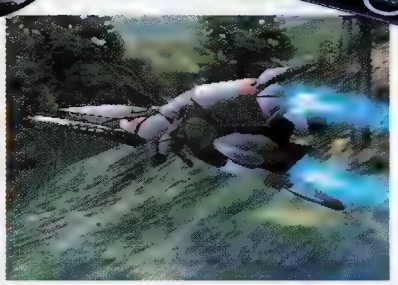
GR: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE GAMEPLAY?

Gust: Well, the most important part of the gameplay would be the race tactics. You have to move up and down or side to side, trying to stay on the power band, at the same time attacking your competitors with weapons. There is a lot to think about during the race, but I hope this gameplay entices those who long for different kinds of race games.

GR: THE GAME LOOKS A BIT LIKE F-ZERO OR WIPEOUT. WHAT IS THIS GAME BASED ON AND DID YOU BORROW IDEAS FROM THOSE RACING GAMES?

Gust: [Smiles] Everyone who has glanced at the game images often says that. However, I did not borrow ideas from those games nor the concept. Personally, I like auto races, especially Formula 1. I am really keen on F1, and I like the F1 series from Psygnosis as





hresvelgr © gust 2000.

WORLD REPUBLIC ELECTRONICS WR 電気製品

well as Ridge Racer. With the power of PS2, I thought, Now I can create something that can be exciting. But also something different from ordinary racing games where your vehicle just moves left to right or right to left. In the case of Hresvelgr, you operate vehicles in a 3D environment. There is yaw, roll, and pitch. Each stage or course has a power band, a sort of energy supply strip laid out along the course, and your planes fly by being right within the energy field or power band. If you fly within the range of the power band, your plane gets a supply of energy, so you can go faster and utilize the functions of your particular craft. But once you get out of range, you will lose speed and no optional features that come with the plane can be utilized. By incorporating 3D environments with the power band, it has become possible to have gameplay in which you have to always consider the best possible maneuvering line, which is the most important concept in any racer.

GR: Is it difficult to make PS2 games?
Gust: To be honest, it is difficult. Since there are not many libraries available for the games yet, each developer has to create [libraries] from scratch. It has been a very time consuming process for us.

GR: It must have been challenging to create Hresvelgr. What was the most difficult obstacle you have so far encountered in the development of the game?
Gust: Well, the most difficult part was how to allocate graphic and sound data. We have struggled with how effectively we can convey music and graphics in the game. Since Hresvelgr comes on CD-ROM, we have restrictions in the amount of data that can be contained on a single ROM, which led to difficulty in creating music data. CD-ROMs, as you know, can contain only 640 MB. Most of the time, there's no problem, as code can be small, like less than one fourth of the ROM capacity. However, music data cannot be compressed because it loses quality, so it consequently becomes big. Each scene and music track had to be minutely calculated to be included on the ROM. It was a backbreaking task because we had to come up with the best possible way without sacrificing the game concept we initially came up with.

GR: Didn't you think about putting everything on DVD?
Gust: Well, we thought of that, but if we did it would have been a waste of space on DVD. Everything has to be efficiently calculated, especially in the economical sense, you know [smiles]. Currently, to print on a single DVD costs about twice as much as printing on two CD-ROMs.

GR: What kind of graphic tools were used for the game?
Gust: We used Light Wave.

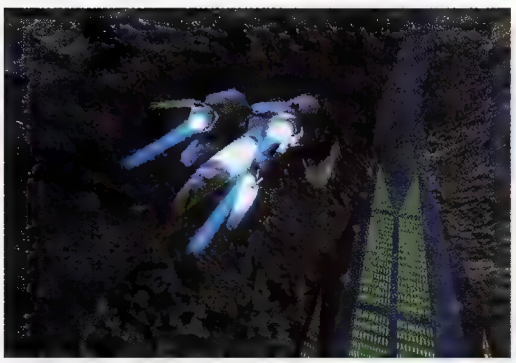
GR: What do you think of Anti-Aliasing effects on PS2? I thought PS2 would display edges of models in the games more perfectly than that of DC. For example, Ridge Racer V shows jagged edges on car models. What is your comment and how will Hresvelgr be in this respect?
Gust: Well, when you have high resolution, you see things more clearly and so there are the edges. I would say that it is a give and take regarding how the images should be represented. It would be nice to have anti-aliasing, but to do so takes up valuable rendering calculation and the entire image could be compromised.

GR: Are you thinking about releasing the game in the U.S.?
Gust: Yes, we would love to. But it all depends on whether the game becomes successful in Japan. If it does, then its prospects improve, and SCE will most likely bring it to North America. I'll just keep my fingers crossed [smiles].

GR: Are you planning to develop games for DC?
Gust: No, we are not planning anything for DC.

GR: Is there any game development going on other than Hresvelgr?
Gust: No. Since we have a relatively small staff and are always on a tight schedule, as you can guess, it is impossible to engage in multiple game development like Konami or Square. We have to finish Hresvelgr before we can tackle any future projects.

GR: Is there any message for gamers or prospective players of the game?
Gust: I hope everybody plays the game and experiences it. The game is very unique and challenging compared to the other racing games. I hope that the game entices players who want to play a different style of racing game. **-J. SAKAI**



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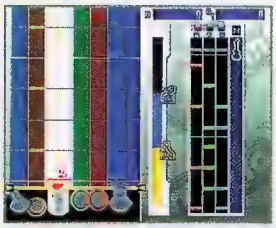
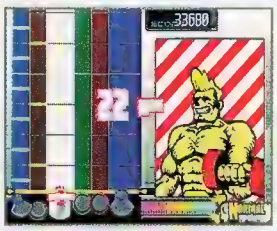
drummania

PS2





Konami has fashioned an interesting repertoire of games under the Bemani umbrella. And refreshingly enough, each new incarnation has been able to feel and play a bit closer to the real-life instrument. Their most recent effort, DrumMania, hints at what will without a doubt help lead to an entire four-member virtual band.

For those who don't know, the entire Bemani series has used the same look and play mechanics. A series of different colored cues drop in patterns that the user must rhythmically tap on the provided instrument.

DrumMania has taken this play style and stretched it to a wider variety of music types and even included remixes of songs found on GuitarFreaks, which can be accompanied by up to two other people using controllers or, even better, the guitar made for the game.

Standard mode really doesn't lend the feel of being a drummer in a band. Instead, you play precisionist alongside a scripted drummer who will automatically run through drum rolls and such. If you want to brave the unforgiving nature of Session mode, you can try your feeble hands at taking responsibility for all of the drumming cues, but be warned that it becomes frustratingly difficult to limber up and memorize the complex patterns.

As Bemani games go, DrumMania stands as the closest thing to re-creating the feel of playing the actual instrument. That said, one would almost be better off investing the time taking drum lessons, because DrumMania will require the same amount of effort to learn and master. **-T. STRATTON**

B

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golf paradise

PS2

To date, most compelling golf video games have been those that involve genuine physics tied with simple play mechanics. No one ever expects the graphic power of a golf game to overly impress, just as long as the courses are varied and balanced. Enter the PS2 and T&E Soft. Those who used to look and laugh, now sit and play.

The interface is fairly standard. A familiar swing meter gauges power and accuracy. Still, the learning curve is a bit long, so expect to play through around 36 holes before you truly begin to understand the science of driving and putting.

Now the best asset Golf Paradise holds is the organic graphics. Water hazards look amazing, trees sway gently during a strong enough wind and a free-roaming camera allows you to see all of the small details strung along each hole.

There are many incentives to complete tournaments like secret courses, extra characters and new clubs. The game is balanced delicately between a serious sim and a lightweight take on the sport. **- T. STRATTON**

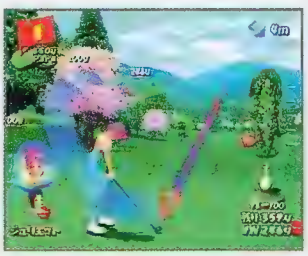
A-

Dreamcast Review

TWINKLE STAR SPRITES

Twinkle Star Sprites, a conversion of SNK's Neo Geo coin-op, is a strange hybrid of hardcore sprite-filled 2D shooter action with a dose of versus puzzle battling. Strange combination, huh? The screen is divided in half vertically and players are confined to their side, where they take on wave upon wave of happy colorful enemies. The trick is that the more enemies you shoot and the more you destroy in close-proximity combos, the more enemies and firepower unload on the other side of the screen where a CPU or human opponent is madly shooting away as well. There are no bosses or set level length—the goal is to make your opponent lose, like in Super Puzzle Fighter. The graphics are lovely, and the twitch action is great (especially against a human opponent), but the lack of bosses and variety leaves the game without long-term appeal. Twinkle Star Sprites is better in the arcades where you can just get your quick fix for a quarter.

-C. HOFFMAN C+



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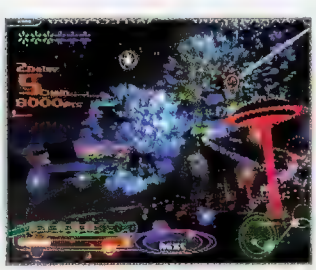
fantavision

PS2

Fantavision is unique and surreal, brilliantly colorful and fantastically beautiful. On any other system the game would be a casual distraction, but on the PlayStation 2, it becomes an often mesmerizing experience.

As much of a tech demo as a game, Fantavision floods the screen with trails of different colored fireworks, requiring you to link as many as possible before they fizzle out. At least three like colors must be linked for an initial explosion, and multicolored chains can be formed when connected by glowing cores. There is certainly a method to exploding every firework onscreen, but the numbers can become so overwhelming that sometimes the best strategy is to stop calculating and simply pound on the controller. Once you get into the flow of setting up double-digit chains, the screen vibrates with a stunning light display.



The fireworks aren't the only stars of the show. After starting from a beautiful bird's eye view of an intricately detailed cityscape, the game moves into space, where the compelling ambience is heightened by backdrops of earth, a space station, planetary colony and worm hole. This celestial tour may be a short one, but its breathtaking sights are worth the price of admission. **-B. FIECHTER**

B+

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PlayStation Review

billiards master 2

It's about time we have the technology to make the pool game we've all been waiting for. I'm surprised this game didn't have a 1:1 selling ratio with the PS2. OK, so a pool game is a pool game, and you're not going to buy it unless you're a hardcore billiards fanatic, but this game does make use of the PS2's abilities. The controls take advantage of the analog buttons (even the D-pad), for camera controls and stroke power, the physics are accurate, and the textures on the balls and the tables are finely detailed. The backgrounds, however, are nothing special. The game starts you out with lessons where you learn basic maneuvers, such as the stop shot, and works you up to more complicated skills involving hitting the ball at different vertical angles. You then take on both game-created and real-life opponents in a variety of games. It feels about as close to the real thing as you can get without actually being there. **-J.R. Haugen** **B-**

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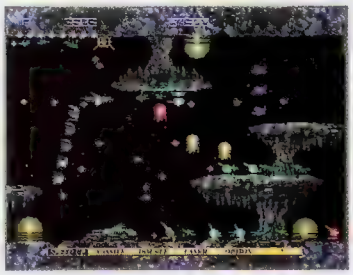
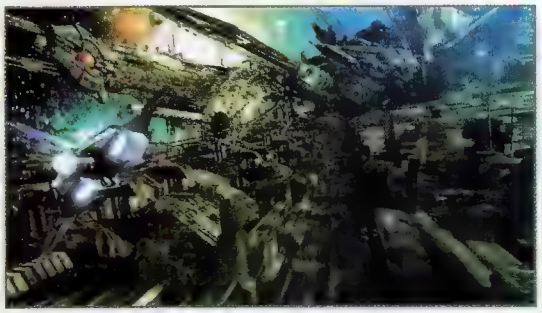
gradius III & IV

PS2

For all those itchy trigger fingers out there, relief has arrived. Konami has come to the rescue of shooter fans everywhere by releasing Gradius III & IV, a collection of two of the most intense blasters ever, in arcade-superior form. Both games feature some of the wildest pattern-based action ever found in a side-scrolling shooter, along with an incredible array of weaponry, legions of enemies, ingenious bosses and more sprites onscreen than should ever be seen by sane human eyes. Gradius III (originally seen in 1989) finally comes home in arcade-perfect form with all the original enemies and levels that never made it into the old SNES conversion (although the extras packed into the 16-bit version have been removed). Gradius IV, which graced arcades last year, is simply stunning with its beautiful graphics and awesome animation, highlighted by morphing bosses and fluid rivers of lava. On top of the flawless arcade ports, this CD is full of extras like an FMV intro, bonus games, a beginners mode, a score-attack mode and a sound test that may be worth the price alone. Even on PlayStation 2, 2D is alive and manic as ever. **-C. Hoffman**





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PlayStation Review

king of fighters '99

The King of Fighters franchise isn't the standard bearer it once was. Not only do KOF's visuals look dated, but this conversion has mildly delayed controls that make special moves tough to pull off, along with the long loading time that has always sunk this series on PlayStation. KOF '99 has lots of nice features like 32 fighters (including several new characters and three versions of Kyo), an art gallery, a character color-edit mode, plus some cool visual tricks like haze effects, but all the extras really don't help make the game any more fun. The new "striker" characters (much like the helpers in Marvel vs. Capcom) don't add much either. Stick to the older King of Fighter games instead. **-C. Hoffman** **C**

World Republic Review • developer/publisher **capcom** • available in japan **now**

final fight revenge

When I heard Final Fight was coming to Saturn, I was ecstatic. When I heard it was a 3D fighter, I cringed. When I played it, I was in agony. What has Capcom done to my beloved Final Fight? It's a legendary series and the Saturn can run awesome games, but Final Fight Revenge, to put it kindly, is garbage.

Maybe if it had come out five years ago, Final Fight Revenge would have been OK. The character models are poorly done: can practically count the polys used on each fighter. They're animated badly, they aren't the right proportions and they're devoid of detail: you can barely see Haggar's moustache. Backgrounds are likewise dull. Simple arenas with three-color floors and uninspired 2D backgrounds in the distance just don't cut it any more. And if Capcom had wanted great music, all they had to do was remix the great tunes from the original, but instead we get insipid audio that will make you reach for the mute button. At least the control is OK.

In fairness, the programmers had some good ideas. The character roster, consisting of Haggar, Cody, Guy, Andore, Sodom, Rolento, Poison, Edi.E, El Gado and Damnd could have been cool, and the inclusion of weapons lying about the arena is interesting. But the lame special moves and laughable animation buried these ideas in a heap of sad execution.

What could have been a beautiful sprite-based side-scrolling brawler sending the Saturn out with a bang instead wound up as a miserable mess that insults Final Fight fans and Saturn owners everywhere. Capcom's revenge is painful indeed. **-C. Hoffman**

D-

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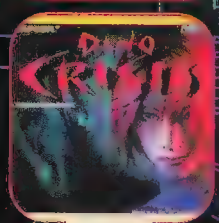

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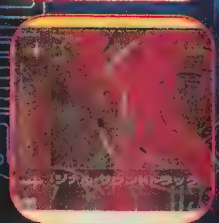

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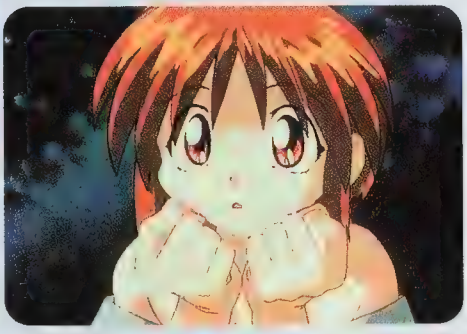
MAZE VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★ ACTION/COMEDY

Maze dumps the viewer into the middle of a rather confusing storyline. The fairly horrific dubbing doesn't help matters either. From what can be gleaned from the mass confusion, Maze is a pretty, young girl, who has been transported to another world. Supposedly she has some sort of special powers that allow her to control a giant techno/bio suit of armor, but there is a big catch. As soon as the last rays of sunlight fade from the sky, Maze is transformed from a shy girl into a raging lecherous young man. Her chosen traveling companions are an argumentative band of warriors. Their rather vague goal is to rescue a princess from a cult of warriors. In the first episode, Maze and her friends are approached by a fairy that desperately needs their help. After agreeing to help the beleaguered fairy, the group finds itself in a town oppressed by a single dictator. Upon arrival, Maze is then captured by the dictator after being invited to the castle. Why? I don't know. But that's the kind of storytelling that runs rampant through this anime. The story starts in a less than desirable position, then proceeds at roughly the speed of sound with little to no explanation.

The art and animation is uninspired and sub-TV quality—think *Slayers*, but with much less imagination. Some anime can be forgiven for this as they make up for it in other ways, but this is not the case with *Maze*. Small elements of *Slayers*-style comedy can be seen in *Maze*, but it just can't seem to achieve the same level of humor that is found in *Slayers*. I'm sure that the humor factor could have been increased had the voices been anything above the absolutely unbearable mark—only an inhuman will of reinforced steel kept my finger from the mute button. Other than the scenes of the lecherous male Maze hopping on anything that vaguely resembles a female, there really wasn't anything to laugh at. Unimpressive character design and poor animation also plague this anime: it was too easy to confuse one character with another. *Maze* needs help in several departments, but having decent voices would, at the very least, boost it into the "marginally watchable" category.



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COWBOY BEBOP VOL.4,5

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT
50 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

God Bless Bandai and Sunrise Inc. for releasing a show that has a supporting cast as strong as its lead. *Cowboy Bebop*, episodes 6-10, plays no favorites, and the next two volumes of this phenomenal series do what any smart show with cult-like addictive qualities should—focus on individual characters and let the audience choose. In true form, the magnificent *Ganymede Ellegy* (ep. 10) is *Bebop* purity. Full of the style, wit, and irony that has gained *Bebop* well-deserved international acclaim, the Shinichiro Watanabe creative team crafts beautiful, introspective moments on the nature of human relationships, the possibility of altruism to a fault, and remorse of such magnitude, that can only be matched by the best of Leiji Matsumoto. Even past this favorite, episodes like the dramatic *Waltz for Venus* (ep. 8) and *Jamming with Edward*—which introduces the newest, and instantly likeable, Edward—show with ease the team's aptitude for juggling dark humor and tragedy with as much skill as the best of Tarantino.

Get nine episodes deep and you start to realize that the beauty of *Bebop* is in its simplicity. There really hasn't been a continuity between the earlier episodes and these last five, except for the growing cast of very simple, deceptively non-cliche characters, that have become one of the most endearing casts I've ever met. Simplifying the pathos into the singular, innately emotional themes of lost love, misplaced honor, and solitude, *Cowboy Bebop* episodes 6-9, like *BubbleGum Crisis*, and some of the best U.S. episodic dramas before it, follow the template of some of the medium's most powerful stories. *Bebop*, even now, is still a pleasure to watch.

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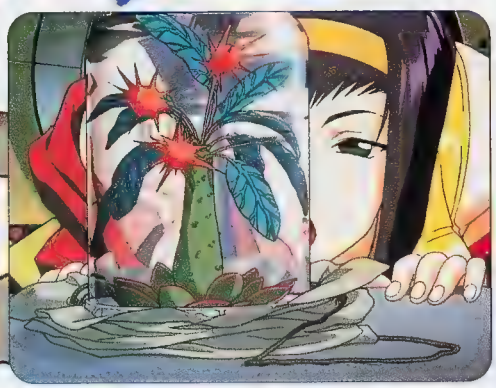

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SHAMANIC PRINCESS VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•12000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

I believe the last time I've seen character design with this kind of shoujo/CLAMP-ish flare was in *Magic Knight Rayearth*. This makes a lot of sense because these two anime share their character designer, the talented Atsuko Ishida. All of the women in *Shamanic Princess* score high on the unearthly beauty scale, plus they get points for not doing the *Cutey-Honey* magical clothes change that involves nudity. Ishida's designs manage to take what would normally be an average anime and bring it up from the depths of mediocrity. Can good art and animation really save an anime? In this case it doesn't need to, but it certainly doesn't hurt.

Tiara is a guardian from another dimension, whose magical strength and prowess in battle is rivaled only by her anger management problems. She has been sent out by the Elder to retrieve a stolen artifact called the Throne of Yord. Her task is to enter the human world as a human girl and track down Kagetsu, who is the thief as well as her former lover. Tiara immediately runs into opposition in the form of another guardian who wants to help Kagetsu by impeding her progress.

At first glance, *Shamanic Princess* appears to be your basic shoujo anime, but this image is quickly dispelled. But instead of informing her opponents that she fights for truth and justice, this red-leather-sporting Sailor Scout will call out her magical demons, and open up a can of whoop-ass.

Epic magic battles are also a strong point for *Shamanic Princess*. The use of magical creatures by Tiara and her rivals look much like the "stands" used in *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*.

The excellent dubbing seals the proverbial deal. U.S. Manga Corps clearly spent money on these voices, and the result is a very acceptable piece of work. For once, I recommend that fans save themselves $10 and go buy the dub.

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LUPIN THE 3RD - THE CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
•2000 MANGA VIDEO
109 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★1/2 ACTION/DRAMA

Castle Cagliostro is nothing new, having hit the streets in Japan back in 1980 and released a decade or so ago in dubbed form by Streamline. However, Manga has now given old *Lupin* the royal treatment and *The Castle of Cagliostro*, one of the best *Lupin* saga's ever, has been digitally re-mastered, is newly dubbed, somewhat re-written (which I have mixed feelings about) and, more importantly, is new to DVD. It's also one of the best old-school titles ever. Hell, it's one of the best, period. Before *KiKi's Delivery Service* and *Princess Mononoke* this is what famed director Hayao Miyazaki was up to. Now a whole new generation of anime fans can discover *Lupin* for the first time.

Lupin, master thief and all around smooth operator, together with his sidekicks, the chain-smoking Jigen, and Goemon, the noble swordsman, have a way of approaching potentially fatal situations that is simply unparalleled. As *Cagliostro* opens in a classic Bond-style overture, we join Lupin and Jigen making their getaway after the heist of a lifetime—the National Casino. As they speed away slicing through traffic Eyewitness News style in Lupins ultra-tricked-out (and seemingly indestructible) Fiat, the duo realizes that its new fortune is entirely...counterfeit! Doh! Not to worry, though. In typical style, changing a negative to a positive, Lupin resolves that this is now a caper worthy of his amazing prowess, and decides to search out the root of the operation and simply take it over. Inspector Zanigata of Interpol, Lupin's arch nemesis, soon takes chase, and we discover that Fujiko, Lupin's competition and ex-lover, is already on the case and...well, looks like it's time once again for some Miyazaki/Monkey Punch magic. If you haven't seen *The Castle of Cagliostro*, one of the best caper films ever, filmed or otherwise, now is the time!

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BUBBLEGUM CRISIS 2040 VOL.3,4

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 ADV FILMS
60 MINUTES EA.•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

BubbleGum Crisis 2040's problem is a conceptual error. If the original *BubbleGum Crisis* was an expression of rebellion, style, and identity amongst the chaos of technological conformity, then how can a new creative team recapture for motivation those very personal feelings, those expressions, into a series by younger creators who no longer have the environment of Japan's rigid structure and techno boom?

Simply put, you can't. The end result is *BubbleGum Crisis 2040*, volumes 3 and 4, continuing this new, much simpler crisis, with technical advances in animation techniques (like the integration of computer coloring and cleaner cells), being the biggest draw. The pissy tradeoff is losing all of the '80s punk angst that made the first series so incredible to begin with. The animators took what was familiar, what was cool, and attempted to re-make them. This makes a look that is sleek and colorful, making the hardsuits absolutely vibrant under this new digital pallete, but a series that seems a little denser in the process.

To their credit, there's still Sylia and Priss who remain the team's backbone. The writers have gone the extra mile of fleshing out Sylia's character, while taking the attention of the series away from Priss. The result isn't completely unsatisfying. Priss remains untouched, dark temper and hardsuit-skill unsurpassed (but her band pales in comparison to the old), while Sylia gets a silly backstory that makes her seem weaker than she should.

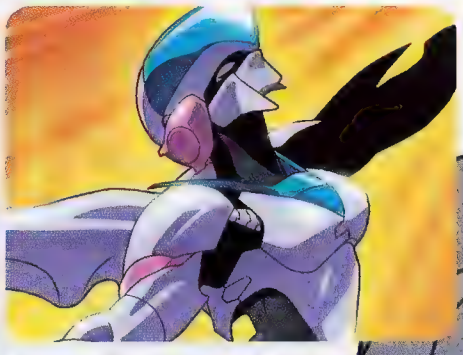
Nene, Linna, and Mackie go through personality shifts, too. Each character's role is more defined, each getting more spotlight, and often characterization, in the process. Again, the price is that the personalities of heroines are much simpler archetypes now, more anime-generic caricatures than any extension of what they were. Even the enemy is restructured. There are boomers here in the new, but now their design is something entirely different, more insectoid and ridiculous, than the piston-driven beasts of design and ferocity that caused so much turmoil for the hardsuits in the first run. The overall is considerably less cool, much more kiddie-friendly.

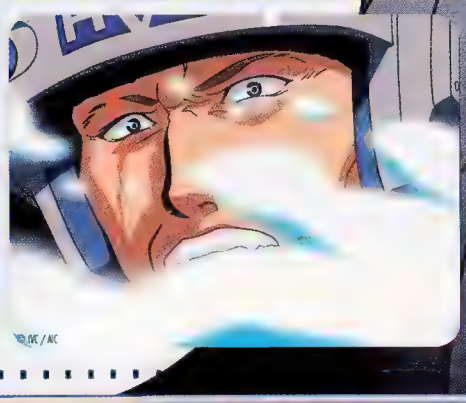
And it's that nod to being more accessible that hurts the *2040 BubbleGum* cohesive.

Without the themes of the original series, episodes like *Look at Yourself* (the best of the series), "where a dead man's memory resurfaces in the body of a boomer and the resurrected horror goes on a rampage," lack the emotional punch the series so desperately wants to claim, but seem silly since the world is unbelievable and the science and mechanics of the old series is dead and buried.

In the end, it's unbelievable seeing metal creatures turn into organic monsters (as the new trend in anime seems to be forcing things to go), and equally ridiculous watching these four women fight a cause that makes little sense. It matters little, though. Judging by the amount of action this series has seen, they'd rather spend time talking romance instead of finding themselves.

If you're a *Crisis* purist, avoid at all cost. If you must buy it, however, the Yoko Kanno theme song is a J-pop orgasm.





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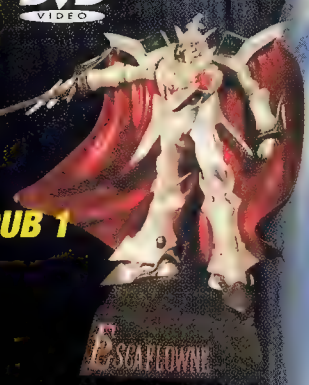

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BRAIN POWERED VOL. 1~4

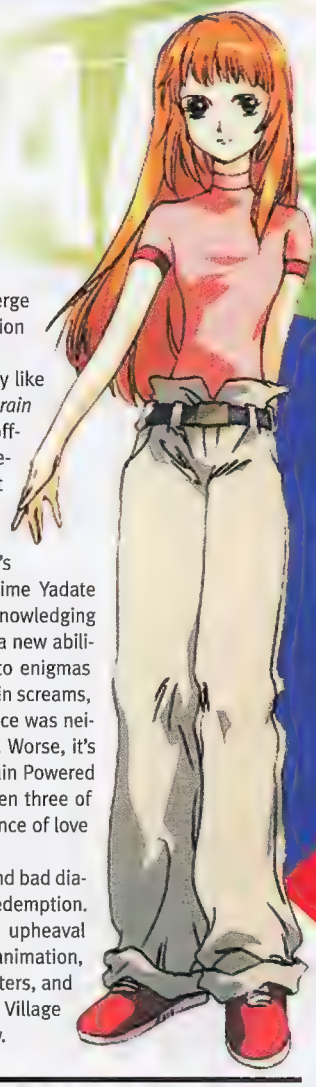
REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•1999 BANDAI ENT.
50 MINUTES EACH•SUBTITLED/ENGLISH DUBBED
★★ ACTION/DRAMA

Naked women drift through blue surreality, over j-pop rock. There's no point, really. None of the women are from the actual show, but the music, if nothing else, is an otaku type of "kewl." That's your intro, though. An awkward mix of trippy images and electric strings. Somewhere in the middle of the first episode, right when the dialogue becomes so bad that you question the quality of the dub, is when you realize the creative mess *Brain Powered* is.

Directed by the legendary Yoshiyuki Tomino (original *Gundam*), with music by Yoko Kanno (*Bebop, Escaflowne*), *Brain Powered* has all the makings of something substantial. Coming off 10 years, and perhaps 10 ideas, too late, Tomino's ambition to merge the better halves of *Gundam*'s bulky tech and military feel, with *Eva*'s bio-mechanical hipness, comes off as a blatantly inferior. Watching *Brain Powered*'s aged writers dually copy *Eva* concepts and sully *Gundam*'s themes, is travesty. *Brain Powered*'s muddled attempt to merge the *Eva* generation with *Gundam* results in confusion and something unnaturally forced.

With a blonde-haired villain that looks remarkably like Char Aznoble, and a heroic twin of Amuro Rei, *Brain Powered*'s incomprehensible script is clumsy, off-paced, and silly. What's explained in *Eva* by off-the-wall metaphysics, or in *Gundam* via goofy, albeit convincing, engineering pseudo-science, is tossed in *BP* rapidly and matter-of-factly. Yoko Kanno's *Escaflowne*-ish score, while excellent, hides Tomino's poor monologues and long exposition. Writer Hajime Yadate attempts his limited knowledge of suspense by acknowledging how surprised the cast is when the hero manifests a new ability. The result is *BP*'s penchant for giving answers to enigmas the audience had no clues existed. Too often, a villain screams, " Your Brain Powered can ____?!" when the audience was neither given warning nor info saying the *BP* couldn't. Worse, it's never explained what the war is about, how the Brain Powered works, or exactly why there's a love triangle between three of the primary characters, when there's been no evidence of love to begin with.

Uninspired designs, overly dramatic characters, and bad dialogue - import or domestic - hurt the work beyond redemption. Organic mecha is better handled on *Eva*, and social upheaval makes better *Gundam*. With sub-par T.V.-level animation, orchestrated music that overemphasizes flat characters, and perhaps one the most confusing dubs from Anime Village yet, *Brain Powered* is for modeling enthusiasts only.



BLUE SUBMARINE NO.6 HEARTS

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•1999 BANDAI ENT.
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

Some series allow new viewers to hop in and enjoy the story from any point. *Blue Submarine 6* is not one of those series. You must see it from the very beginning. While still an excellent piece of work, *Blue Sub* continues down its spiral of confusion. Events are hard to comprehend, and one can know what is going on without truly *understanding* what is going on.

Hayame is stranded at sea. Drifting with the currents, he remembers how he came to be in this position. Once he is rescued by Myutu, one of the female cat-like creatures, he starts to come to some conclusions about the war. Maybe there was no need for war. Maybe they were all just pawns. Would the world be better flooded by ocean and rid of all humans? Why can't they reach some sort of common ground?

Although *Blue Sub 6* puts a unique and often strange twist on this story, it is still the simple story of survival of the fittest between two groups of species. The idea of genocide and a small population struggling to keep their species alive is not all that new.

Blue Sub 6 also presents the viewer with some of the best art, animation and computer graphics available in the world of anime. My only question is: Why was it not blended better? Whenever the incredible CGI takes the screen, it is painfully obvious against the flat 2D images. This makes for a rather stark and surreal world. But perhaps this was the goal of the designers. The creature and mecha designs that are found in *Blue Submarine 6* are some of the most creative and inspired found in anime today. The only drawback to *Blue Sub* is that you only get 30 minutes a tape, so there isn't much anime for your money. Since the dubbing is quite acceptable, fans should save themselves some money and buy the dubbed version.

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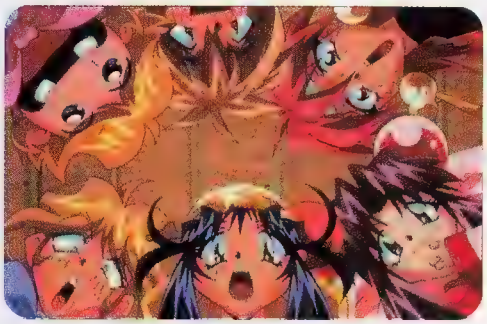
SABER MARIONETTE J AGAIN!

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•1999 BANDAI ENT.

54 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED

★★★★ ACTION/ADVENTURE



Lime, Bloodberry, and Cherry are back, and this time they brought a friend. This OVA continues the saga of Otaru's marionettes, after their epic battle with Faust, the dictator of Gartlant. Normal life continues in Japoness...well as normal as life gets with three superhuman, hyperactive marionettes living within the city limits. Terra II scientists have used Lorelei's cells to start the cloning process of introducing the human female into the all-male population on Terra II. Lime, Bloodberry, and Cherry, Otaru's marionettes and the official saviors of Terra II have opened a restaurant and fully integrated themselves into life in the country of Japoness. So life is good. But Otaru soon learns that he still has much to accomplish in his young life. The first of which is to teach Faust's marionettes, Tiger, Panther, and Luchs, how to become slightly more domestic. With peace settling across the planet, there is very little use for marionettes that have intimate knowledge of lethal weaponry and explosive materials. After Lorelei's return, Faust realizes that he has three marionettes that don't know how to function in a normal, peaceful society. So it's up to Otaru, Lime, Bloodberry, and Cherry to teach their new students how to become upstanding citizens. Otaru quickly accepts this new challenge and agrees to help train the tactless Saberdolls.

While dramatic upheaval is the call of the day for Otaru's personal life, Terra II seems to have its own ideas about dramatic upheaval. The normally calm weather patterns on Terra II are becoming increasingly unstable, and no one can figure out a way to stop the massive buildup of plasma. Coinciding with the impending crisis, Lime brings home a new friend. A new marionette? Ah well... One more marionette added to the herd can't make life much harder than it already is. The new marionette, Marine, is a shy, newly awakened marionette who comes from the sea. But why is Marine just showing up now? Why did she sleep so long, and where are the other two marionettes that should have showed up with her?

SMJ Again keeps up the high-quality storytelling that was started by its predecessor. The storylines manage to stay heavy and dire, addressing serious issues, while adding in a suitable amount of cheer and comedy to keep the mood from becoming overly depressed. The marionettes were just so likeable from *SMJ*, making a second story involving them practically a must. The added twist of having Otaru's and Faust's marionettes attempting to occupy the same living space makes for some great comedy situations. The domestication of the Saberdolls alone is enough to send anyone with the meanest sense of humor into fits of laughter.

Combine the unique art of *SMJ*, new digital color, and fluid animation, and you get one giant, sweet lump of eye candy. The digital color, while still noticeable, in *SMJ Again* is blended exceptionally well. It's very hard to tell that the pictures have not been colored by hand. The only two things that really give it away are the less-than-spectacular super-digital special effects, which come off looking very amateur-ish, and the robotic-feeling trucks and pans.

As dubs go, this is one of the better ones. However, as one biased and appreciative of anything where Megumi Hayashibara makes a vocal appearance, getting the subtitle is a must. But for those people who aren't nearly as picky, save yourself some money, because the dub is still a great way to go.

There really haven't been any changes made to Saber Marionette, which is quite all right. Getting more of what you love is perfectly acceptable.

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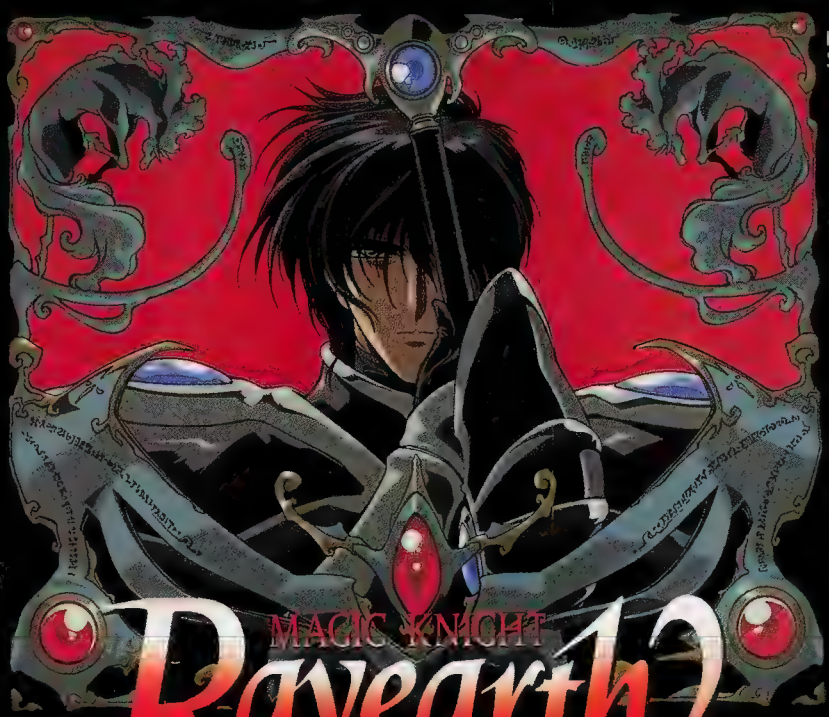

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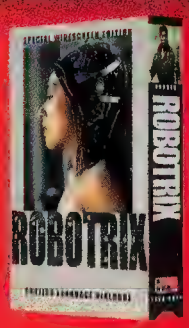

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McFARLANE TOYS

When you see figures this detailed patterned after today's trendiest pop culture icons, it can only mean one thing – McFarlane toys is pourin' molds! Paying homage to the granddaddy of shock rock (and one mean golfer), Alice Cooper has finally been memorialized, as has one of the current bevy of goth/horror superstars, Rob Zombie. A finer pairing of the old and new you'll not find anywhere (although they're sold separately). Elsewhere, Austin and his funky cohorts are on to their [illegible] shagedelic series, complete with [illegible] bots. But do the tats spew [illegible]

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With all of these great toys, who needs the game. Go out back and play in the yard with Palisades Marketing's Front Mission 3 figures. Hot mechs from 2112, look for Drake, Grezen, Kyojin, Zenislev, and Meledin all coming soon. You can prebook these Square-soft-bred mech action figures for $27.95 each at palisadesmarketing.com.

Join Jill Valentine and Nemesis together at last. And what a spectacular-looking couple they make. These vinyl statues will be available this summer from Palisades. No price was available at press time but you can check the Palisades site for updated information.

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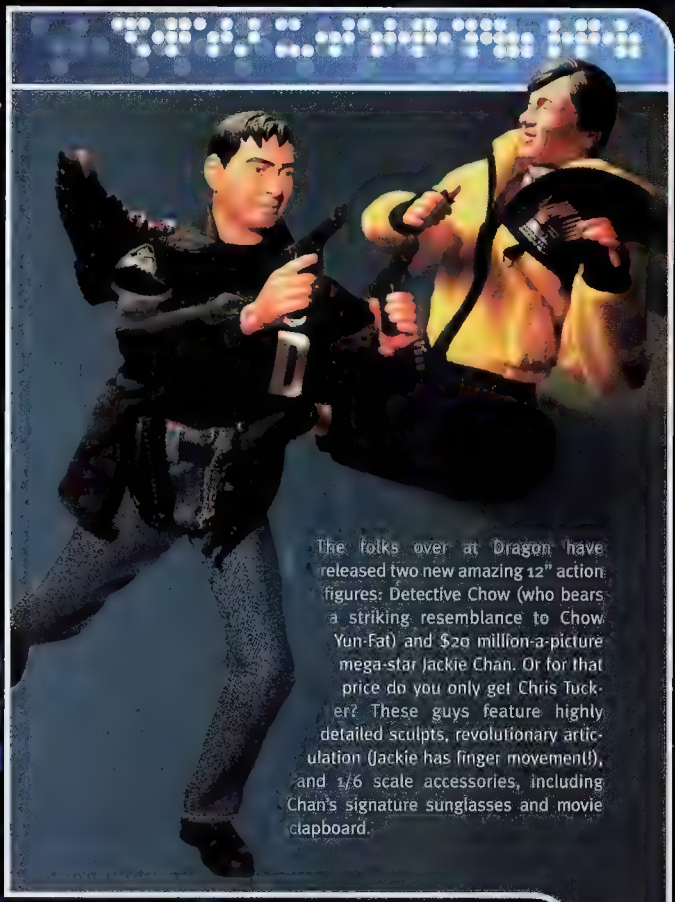
What do we have here... Fighting Force action figures? And you thought only A titles like Final Fantasy and Crash ... memorialized in plastic. Actually these character designs aren't half bad and the quality looks very nice. Perhaps this will lead to a whole new life for the beat 'em up that was originally supposed to give Streets of Rage a run for its money. Ah, Streets – now there's a game worthy of plastic! From BBi, check 'em out on the web at www.blueboxtoys.com

Also from BBi and based on one of 99's coolest shooters on the PlayStation, Omega Boost (from the makers of Gran Turismo), comes fully poseable 6-inch Herbarcher and Beta Boost. I expect to see these two conversing in the Toy Fare price guide! Very nice.

Next from N2 toys in their highly successful Matrix line – 12" Neo, Neo and Trinity ... the new Trinity sold cast, and ... a lovely sentinel to ... u around the house! Keep an ... the major sites like actionace.com ... fandom.com for all the latest ... info. Or check out the WB store at ... at mall, if you still shop the old way, with all of that...walking.



The folks over at Dragon have released two new amazing 12" action figures: Detective Chow (who bears a striking resemblance to Chow Yun-Fat) and $20 million-a-picture mega-star Jackie Chan. Or for that price do you only get Chris Tucker? These guys feature highly detailed sculpts, revolutionary articulation (Jackie has finger movement!), and 1/6 scale accessories, including Chan's signature sunglasses and movie clapboard.

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Sony • www.sony.com or www.tivo.com • Retail: $400

Desirability:

After living with a Philips-branded TiVo for the better part of a year, I am now sold on the delights of pausing live television and having an archive of perfectly labeled TV shows stored on the system's internal hard disk. For the TV junkie, TiVo is the best consumer electronics device since DVD, and I almost never use VHS anymore. Recording shows requires just a single button press, and TiVo will even record programs that it thinks I might be interested in through some black-magic algorithm.

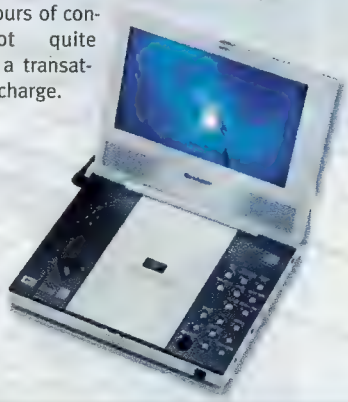
As a sign of greater confidence in the market for such products, Sony has recently released their own TiVo-licensed machine, the SVR-2000. With its built-in 30 Gb hard drive, up to 30 hours of roughly VHS quality recordings can be stored on the lowest quality setting, and about nine hours at the highest MPEG-2 encoding level, roughly equivalent to DVD quality. A monthly subscription to the TiVo service currently costs $9.95, and this entitles the user to full program listings and other special features.

• Sharp DV-L70U

Sharp • www.sharp-usa.com • Retail: $1200

Desirability:

Portable DVD players are becoming fairly common, with prices creeping ever lower and sizes shrinking to the absolute bare minimum. The Sharp DV-L70U is one of the most compact we've seen, and it offers a wealth of inputs and outputs (supporting S-Video for both), allowing it to double not only as a home player but also as a portable monitor. Its comparatively large seven-inch 16:9 TFT LCD screen with an approximate resolution of 340,000 pixels promises good image clarity and its Lithium Ion battery should provide about three hours of continuous use—not quite enough to survive a transatlantic flight on one charge.



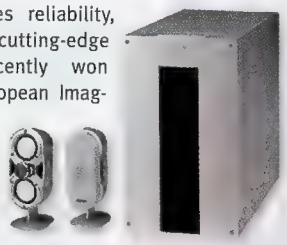
GRGEAR

• Sony SAV-E705

Sony • www.sony.com • Retail: $1500

Desirability:

With the PlayStation 2's DVD playback capabilities and the potential for multi-channel game soundtracks, a proper six-speaker setup is becoming a must for the dedicated gamer. One of the best-looking and -sounding we've encountered is Sony's SAV-E705, a six-speaker pack that includes five matched speakers for front, center and rear channels, along with a powered subwoofer. Not the cheapest way to play back Dolby Digital or DTS, but the speakers' aluminum construction ensures reliability, and their cutting-edge design recently won them a European Imaging and Sound Association award.



• Sharp e-musée

Sharp • www.sharp.co.jp • Retail: $350

Desirability:

Using the MagicGate Memory Stick technology licensed from Sony, Sharp has just released a self-contained solid-state music player in Japan called the e-musée. This light and comfortable device fits around the user's head Lobot-style and will play Atrac 3 files, which can be encoded from MP3s or direct from CDs using the included MG Jukebox PC software. Up to one hour of music can be stored on a 64 MB MagicGate Memory Stick at the highest data rate of 132 kbps. While Sharp has no plans to release the e-musée in the States, with the popularity of other solid-state music players, we are fairly confident that we will see this or a very similar device soon.

• Pioneer musiQube

www.pioneerelectronics.com • Retail: $270-330

Desirability:

We recently spied these cute little Pioneer stereos while in Japan, and they've just released them in the States. Available in a multitude of colors and themes, the Pioneer musiQubes also come in CD and MiniDisc configurations, perfect for the bedroom.

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PALISADES

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

APARTMENT 26

During a recent visit to Interplay we got to spend more time with Gekido and for the first time get a taste of what kind of music the game would hold. From the beginning, the music really interested us and, after some probing questions and support from the producers of the game, we were able to arrange a talk with Biff, lead singer from Apartment26. You can learn more about the group at www.hollywoodrecords.com

GR: We like to listen to music from every stretch of the industry and haven't heard of Apartment26 before. Where are you guys based out of?

Aptzo: Well, we come from England, but are trying to base our music here in the U.S. because we feel there is more of an audience here for the type of music we are creating. We've been a different bands making music for about four years, but formed Apartment26 only about two years ago.

GR: Nice. What labels did you work up with?

Aptzo: Hollywood Records. We first signed the record deal in late October, and have spent as much time as I can there.

GR: So how did the opportunity for licensing your music for a video game come about?

Aptzo: Most of it was our publishing company trying to get some exposure. One day I got into a conversation with some of the people at Interplay and they asked about video games and how much a part of our—the band's—lives they were. So they sent us some footage of their game, not much as a video game would be there.

GR: That's cool. What system started your association with video games?

Aptzo: The NES system and that led to the Sega Genesis, PlayStation and now the Dreamcast. I mean, it was pretty exciting at the time we got our first one and always have a game system with us. Our record Liberty even contained a song on the PlayStation game called Music, which was released in Europe. It is sort of a music sequencer and has a lot of sounds that resembled us at video games when we were younger, like Mario Bros., which we grew up with. Those beeps and electronic sounds and melodies are probably one of our biggest musical influences.

GR: Realize that must have taken some time to iron out. Is it a song that made it to your album?

Aptzo: Yes it is. I think it was one of the tracks we used for the game Gekido, but I am not sure. The name of the song is "Backwards."

GR: Has this opportunity sparked more interest in creating music specifically for a video game?

Aptzo: Yes. Actually, since we were in first discussions about Gekido we've loved that we have a style of music that is a perfect match for creating dance phone for a video game, it's funny because when we sing in concert during a new song, I wonder if someday only video game fans because of the heavy electronic influence. So we add more guitar and rock based textures.

GR: Did you get to see the game (Gekido) before any music was added? Did it help you decide which tracks to lend to the game?

Aptzo: Well, sort of. I didn't get to play the game. I only saw a pieced-together after our music was already in place. I think the collection of our songs and Fantasy Star is really cutting for the game. It was kinda' interesting though, because I didn't know which given our music was going to be for, only that the scenes were changing. And you may after looking through a few videos I saw the videos for Gekido and thought that it looked pretty cool. Shortly, after I find out that, Interplay, our songs were for that video game. So it was pretty cool.

GR: Well, I don't want to eat up anymore of your time. I really appreciate you speaking with us and look forward to seeing you once you're in L.A.

Aptzo: It was my pleasure. In the way the tours, if we didn't make music we would all be at home 24 hours a day playing new games. Now being a part of them is really exciting for us.

Special thanks to Biff and Aptzo, Mike Schneidow and Wayne Irvin at Interplay

SUIT UP!

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Limited Edition 3D Cover

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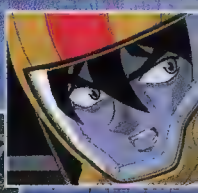

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DVD VIDEO DOLBY DIGITAL

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—Sci Fi Entertainment

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http://www.bandai-ent.com http://www.gundamofficial.com

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

YUZO KOSHIRO

Yuzo Koshiro was gaming's first rock star. Made famous by his amazing work on the TurboGrafx CD, Genesis and Super NES in such games as Y's, Revenge of Shinobi, Streets of Rage 1, 2 and 3 and ActRaiser, he went on to form Ancient, where he helped create Beyond Oasis for the Genesis and Legend of Oasis for the Saturn. With his first U.S. soundtrack hitting stores soon, we thought we'd catch up with Yuzo to see what lies ahead.

GR: Mr. Koshiro, first I must commend you for creating some of the most legendary music of the 16-bit era in games such as ActRaiser, Revenge of Shinobi, Adventure Island, Y's, and Streets of Rage. Since these, few artists have been able to capture the same level of drama and excitement within a game environment. When might we receive your next future classic?

Yuzo: We have not spent too much time on the beginning of [illegible] we will have a few incredible titles ready for release.

GR: As the first artist to successfully introduce techno into a gaming environment with the original Streets of Rage, to what do you attribute your foresight?

Yuzo: One of the reasons why I used techno and house for Streets of Rage is because I was not being a fan of that time, and was influenced by the style of music. Nobody in that days using in the games, so I decided to.

GR: After Streets of Rage 1 & 2, you changed your style dramatically with Streets 3. How was that received?

Yuzo: For Streets of Rage 3, I used a method called "Acid-jam Sound Creation Generation," which was the newest techno method back then. I wanted the program and listened to go with whole groove rather than pop music.

GR: How many years later, the work you did in the late '80s and early '90s is still fresh. Do you feel that the climate in video game music still lends itself to pioneering new musical styles?

Yuzo: As long as you understand the music and skills, it is always possible to create music that will never be stale like out-moving today's trends. I just don't want to stick to Japanese sense. I want people in the world enjoy and to have fun listening to my music. I'm always keeping this in mind when I work on it.

GR: We haven't heard much from you for some time. Are you working on other projects, or just getting your second wind?

Yuzo: Currently, I am working as a producer for a Dreamcast game of which we are doing it's sound design and music.

GR: What is Ancient—your gaming company—up to? Are you still producing games? An Oasis sequel on Dreamcast certainly would be welcome.

Yuzo: At Ancient we are basically re-organizing regarding game and production. There is no plan for a sequel of Beyond Oasis, but we are considering developing a great role-playing game.

GR: What do you think of today's music scene, both in Japan and in America? What are your thoughts on hip hop, rap, and the resurgence of hard rock?

Yuzo: I don't think today's music scene is in a good condition. I don't feel any creativity and it seems so ordinary.

GR: Who are your favorite U.S. and Japanese artists?

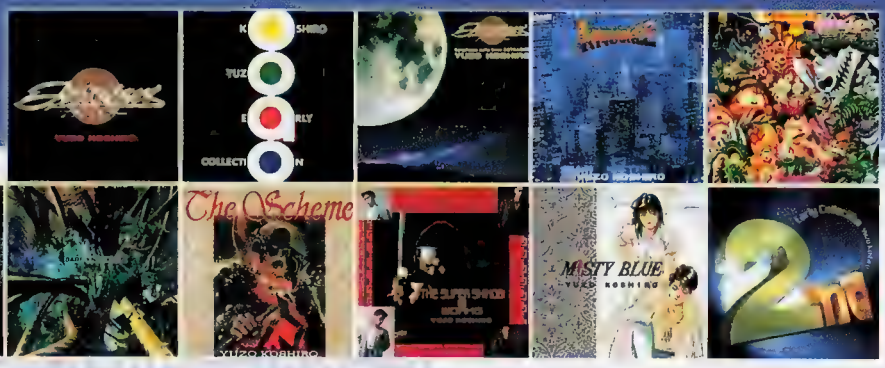
Yuzo: I'm not familiar with [illegible] music, but I like Prince and [illegible].

GR: What is your opinion on Dreamcast? Why do you think such a promising machine is not doing so well in Japan while it enjoys great success in America? With games like Grandia II, Eternal Arcadia, Sakura Wars, and Phantasy Star on the way, one would think the Dreamcast would be huge in Japan.

Yuzo: This is a pretty tough question. One reason is that it is difficult for the Dreamcast to compete with established PlayStation titles like Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy in Japan.

GR: We're excited that the Streets of Rage 2 soundtrack is finally being introduced in the U.S. from Mars Colony Music. You signed the original Japanese release for me many years ago and I still listen to it often.

Yuzo: Thank you very much. I look forward to hopefully releasing more titles in the U.S. in the years to come.



MARS COLONY MUSIC

Excited at the prospect of a company dedicated to bringing Japanese game music to the States (finally), we sat down with our old friend Kei Kuboki to get the lowdown on Mars Colony.

GR: Well, Kei, it's about time somebody started bringing out Japanese game soundtracks in the U.S. How did you get started?
MC: I've always loved video game music since back in the day of the Genesis. My favorite was Vapor Trail. That soundtrack made me bang my head against the wall it was so great. My other favorites were Street Fighter II, Contra, Y's, Ninja Warriors, and Alter Burner. Yes, wow, the classics. I used to cover a lot of gaming events in Japan. One of those trips included the "Game Music Festival 1993," where I met live and a bunch of gaming music artists. Participating bands were S.S.T. Band (Sega), Soundwalker, Blade Loop, Tentatia (Namco), Alpha Lyra (Capcom), Arik (Falcom), and Konami Club (Konami). It was fascinating for me to hear the video game music being played live. It really struck a chord in me. Since then I've been doing marketing research, planning the perfect time for the launch of Mars Colony Music and after years of arduous work, I've come to the conclusion that the time is now!

GR: Many of the best Japanese soundtracks emerged throughout the late '80s and early '90s. Even though they are somewhat dated, the music is still some of the best ever produced. How will you go about marketing this material to get the new user's awareness up?
MC: A lot of those classics contain music that shares a timeless appeal. Take dubbing music. Couple that with people's passion for dramatic pop culture and we have an instant audience. In fact, word of mouth is turning out to be an excellent marketing tool, especially around some of the older titles that we're doing. It's amazing how these pieces of music stay ingrained in people's minds. We're constantly receiving inquiries about older soundtracks, which is very encouraging. It's showing that gamers are hungry for this stuff and we are ready to be there to supply the demand.

GR: Of course you'll be bringing out modern collections as well. What's in the pipe that has been recorded recently?
MC: Our first two titles were Resident Evil 3: Nemesis and Dino Crisis. Power Stone, Street Fighter III Third Strike and Resident Evil Orchestra are on the way. Brace yourselves. This is good stuff.

GR: What is the criteria you look for in deciding to bring a title to the U.S.?
MC: We want to concentrate on the most super-fun, happy-robotic titles out there—titles that capture the excitement of the gaming world. There's so much great music out there—pop, techno, metal, jazz, orchestral and experimental, all genres are welcome. I'm just a music maker at heart so MCM has something for all heads!

GR: How can people reach you to suggest their favorites? Does Mars Colony Music have a site yet?
MC: Yes, you can find us at www.marscolonymusic.com. We have a section for people to send in their opinions about our soundtracks as well as suggestions. Please send us E-mails, we enjoy passing them around the office and having a good laugh.

GR: Have you been successful attracting any major chains yet to carry your soundtracks? How about EB, Babbages, and Software Etc. Will they be carrying your titles?
MC: Eventually MCM CDs will be available at retailers all over the country. But the quickest way to get your copies right now is to go to the MCM store at www.marscolonymusic.com.

GR: How have the record companies in Japan been? Are they and the artists receptive to U.S. distribution?
MC: The Japanese have been extremely receptive to the idea. They like seeing their hard work being appreciated over here. The companies we're working with have been absolutely helpful and for that we thank them.

GR: Because I've been so into import game music for so long, I'm going to name some favorites. Tell me if we'll see any of these: Y's Perfect Collection, LandStalker, Guardian Heroes, Magic Knight Rayearth, ActRaiser, Silpheed, Sonic CD, Panzer Dragoon, Lunar or anything from Zuntata?
MC: [laughs] I can't go into details at the moment, but we are talking to a number of gaming companies. Perhaps you may just get your wish. Watch out for announcements soon.

GR: You seem to have a solid relationship with Capcom. Any news of a Strider 2 soundtrack?
MC: At least I've been told I have [illegible] Resident Evil 3 soundtrack!

GR: Will you offer downloads in the future so people can sample all of the classics and then pay-per-play?
MC: Samples will be available for download on the site. As far as a pay-per-play-type deal, that may be coming along in the future as well.

GR: Is game music as big in Japan today as it was in the 16-bit era? Do Zuntata and Alpha Lyra still hold concerts?
MC: Gaming music is insanely huge over in Japan. It's not bizarre to see a video game soundtrack sitting at the top of the charts over there. Taito has told me that Zuntata is still holding live concerts a few times a year.

GR: Have you given any thought to releasing anime soundtracks?
MC: Absolutely! Keep checking back at our site for more information.

GR: Okay, we know about the site! What is the current state of Chinese bootlegs coming into the country? Is anyone controlling the flow of these cheap imitations?
MC: U.S. customs isn't allowing any more of these CDs into the country and they're being banned at conventions and comic book stores. We're pursuing them further to make sure that they're completely exterminated.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 124 ▸

Audiophiles

D. Halverson	B. Fiechter	M. Hobbs	T. Stratton	Pooch
1. **APOLLO FOUR FORTY** *gettin high...*	1. **VERTICAL HORIZON** *running on ice*	1. **AIR** *the virgin suicides*	1. **NO DOUBT.** *return of saturn*	1 **DR DRE** *chronic 2001*
2. **PRINCESS MONONOKE** *soundtrack*	2. **ARVO PART** *alina*	2. **AIR** *premiers symptomas*	2. **DEL** *both sides of the brain*	2. **TUPAC** *greatest hits*
3. **HEAVY METAL 2000** *soundtrack*	3. **STROKE 9** *album #4*	3 **UTE LEMPER** *punishing kiss*	3. **PRINCE PAUL** *a prince among thieves*	3 **DJ SHADOW** *endtroducing*
4. **FIFTH ELEMENT** *soundtrack*	4. **THE CURE** *blood flowers*	4. **u-ZIQ** *royal astronomy*	4. **VIDEODRONE** *videodrone*	4 **BEASTIE BOYS** *anthology*
5 **MARILYN MANSON** *mechanical animals*	5. **AMERICAN BEAUTY** *soundtrack*	5. **HOOVERPHONIC** *blue wonder power milk*	5. **OL' DIRTY BASTARD** *nigga please*	5. **H B MODELING SCHOOL** *so how's your girl?*

J.R. Haugen	C. Hoffman	E. Fear	B. Elmquist	G. Abraham
1. **VARIOUS ARTISTS** *space channel 5 remix*	1. **YASUNORI MITSUDA & MILLENNIAL FAIR:** *creid*	1. **ROMEO MUST DIE** *soundtrack*	1. **AGHORA** *aghora*	1. **SMITH & MIGHTY** *big world small world*
2 **SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV** *soundtrack*	2. **KONAMI KuKeiHa CLUB** *snatcher >> policenauts*	2. **BLINK 182** *dude ranch*	2 **THREE DOORS DOWN** *a better life*	2 **DIESELBOY** *system upgrade*
3. **DJ DEF** *tofu mix*	3. **SARAH McLACHLAN** *mirrorball*	3. **CITY OF ANGELS** *soundtrack*	3. **KITTIE** *spit*	3 **DOM & ROLAND** *industry*
4. **TRANSFORMERS movie** *soundtrack*	4. **U2** *the B sides*	4. **XTC** *nonesuch*	4. **PANTERA** *reinventing the steel*	4 **L'ARC-N-CIEL** *tierra*
5. **HAYSI FANTAYZEE** *battle hymns for children sing*	5 **XENOGEARS** *original soundtrack*	5. **DUKE NUKEM** *music to score by*	5 **NO DOUBT** *return of saturn*	5 **ROBOT CARNIVAL** *original soundtrack*

X-FILES SEASON ONE DVD SET

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT (www.foxhome.com)
DOMESTIC • DVD
UNRATED
REVIEWED BY EDD FEAR

So you're a bona-fide *X-Files* fan: you've bought all the VHS tapes, the DVD of the movie, collected the season guides and taped every episode from Fox TV and FX. You may have even sat outside a Malibu drugstore to see which car was David Duchovny's (for non-stalking purposes, of course). Now Fox is releasing season one as a DVD gift pack, and you'll not only pony up the $150 for it, but you'll be happy to do it. The seven-disk boxed set includes all 24 episodes of the first season, as well as a new 11-minute documentary, *The Truth About Season One*. Also here: interviews with creator Chris Carter on selected episodes, added footage for two episodes ("Pilot" and "Fallen Angel"), eleven "Behind the Truth" segments, two original TV spots for each episode and a 60-second spot for the pilot, and a DVD game called Seeds of Deception. If the truth is out there, it's probably in this set.

MAX STEEL

BROADCAST

SONY PICTURES (www.maxsteeltv.com/www.spe.sony.com)
DOMESTIC • BROADCAST TV (WARNER BROS)
UNRATED
REVIEWED BY EDD FEAR

Taking the CGI animation of Saturday morning kids' shows to the next level, Sony's *Max Steel* is the first big promotional blitz of 2000. It is, first and foremost, a weekly series about Josh McGrath, a nineteen-year-old extreme sports nut who is accidentally infused with cutting-edge nanotechnology, giving him superhuman strength and abilities to become a superhero spy, but without the training and calculated mind that should go with it. Of course, there's a good- guy organization he's a part of, and a bad-guy organization he's sworn to thwart. The toys are at your local toy store now. Can a game and/or movie be far behind?

TITAN A.E.

PREVIEW

FOX (www.fox.com)
DOMESTIC • THEATRICAL RELEASE JUNE 2000
RATED PG
PREVIEWED BY EDD FEAR

Don Bluth's upcoming animated sci-fi epic *Titan A.E.* looks to be about as far a leap from his previous films like *All Dogs Go To Heaven* and *Anastasia* as you can get. Boasting the vocal talents of such box office draws as Matt Damon, Bill Pullman, Drew Barrymore, and Nathan Lane, *Titan A.E.* follows the story of a young man, Cale (Matt Damon), living in a drifting space colony amongst the survivors of the destruction of Earth. He endeavors to find the Titan, a legendary spacecraft from the days before Earth was destroyed, which is believed to hold the key to saving the lost colonists and helping them find a new planetary home. Their alien enemies, the Drej, also take a keen interest in Cale's quest, and thus unfolds the epic animated tale of the summer.

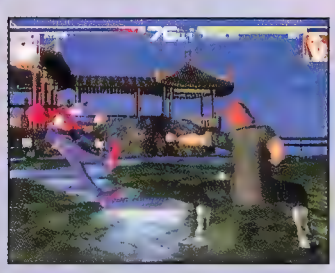
THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

the hottest new martial arts star from the far east (you did see *Romeo Must Die*, didn't you?!), is being considered for the next two *Matrix* films. Wait, isn't one a prequel and the other a sequel? No problem: he'll kick ass either way. • BUT DOES THIS? There's also a buzz that Jet Li may be starring as Kato in the upcoming Green Hornet film. But would he get to kick ass? • MAMA GONNA SKATE YOU OUT: LL Cool J continues his Hollywood onslaught by signing on to star with Chris Klein in the remake of *Rollerball*. I can't decide if I'm anticipating the movie, or just the soundtrack... • SHE'LL BE BAHK: Although Arnold and James Cameron aren't signed on to any future *Terminator* projects, Linda Hamilton is on board for the the next two sequels. Hey, maybe LL Cool J can sign on, too, with Jet Li kicking ass at his side. • USE THE 10110100 FORCE: George Lucas has made the decision to film most of the next *Star Wars* film using high-definition Sony digital cameras with Panavision lenses. He says he's convinced the picture quality is as good or better than film; we're convinced the plot and acting will remain unchanged.

WWW.MARSCOLONYMUSIC.COM

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

ARIAL GARDEN
To get the Firefly level, go to options and activate the VS. stage selector, then use the right trigger to select Arial Garden in Vs. mode.



BOUNCY ASSETS TRICK
In the options menu, choose other, go to the character age option, the higher the age the bouncier they get.

CAMERA ZOOM
To zoom the camera in during battle taunts, just press B button while your character is taunting after the replay. (this doesn't work for tag team taunts.)

CLEAR PAUSE SCREEN
Press X+Y after pausing the game for a clear pause screen. This also works by simultaneously pressing both triggers.

CONTROL CAMERA DURING VICTORY POSE
While your character is doing their victory pose, press and hold the X button and use either control pad to rotate the camera around them.

HIDDEN CUT-SCENE
To view the hidden cut-scene, you must first play as Ayane in story mode. When you get to the battle against Kasumi you must K.O. her in the ice pit, she must land approximately 10ft away from you. If done correctly, you will then see a new cut-scene.

HIDDEN WALLPAPER
Put the DOA2 disc into your CD-ROM drive to find wallpaper images in the bonus directory.

FREEZE FRAME
Hold the B button, Y button, and Up-Right on the Analog control stick during a replay. The camera should spin around the fighters who are stuck in mid-combat.

TAUNTS
To perform a taunt for a character simply press forward, back, forward then punch, kick and free at the same time. Some characters have more then one: just reverse the motion to back, forward, back.

FEAR EFFECT

INVINCIBILITY
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Right, Square.

ALL WEAPONS
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Up, Circle.

FULL AMMUNITION
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Left, Triangle.

EXTRA AMMUNITION
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Left, Left, L1, L2.

ONE HIT KILL WITH FIREARMS
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Down, R1.

ONE HIT KILL WITH SMACK-JACK, KNIFE, OR BRASS KNUCKLES
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Down, L1.

EXPERT MODE
Select Credits at the options screen, then press Down, Down, Down, Triangle, Down, Down , Down, Square, Left, Right.

RAPID FIRE
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Up, Up, Up, Down.

INSTANT PUZZLE SOLUTIONS
Select Credits at the options screen, then press L1, Triangle, Up, Down, Circle, Circle, Down, Down, Down, Up.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

The screen will shake if the following codes are entered correctly.

RANDOM STARTING LOCATIONS IN FREE SKATE MODE
Pause the game , then hold L and press C-Left, C-Right, C-Down, Up, Down.

LESS FALLS
Pause the game, then hold L and press C-Up, C-Right, Left, C-Right, Right, Up, Down.

10X TRICK MULTIPLIER
Pause the game, then hold L and press Down, Right, Up, Right, Up, Left, C-Left.

FAST SPECIALS
Pause the game, then hold L and press C-Up, Left, C-Down, C-Down, Up, Down, Right.

ALL TAPES
Pause the game, then hold L and press C-Right, Left, Up, C-Up, C-Up, Right, Down, Up.

SLOW MOTION
Pause the game, then hold L and press Down, Down, C-Up, C-Right, Left.

TURBO MODE
Pause the game, then hold L and press Right, Up, Down, Down, Up, Down.

VIEW SKATER'S SPECIAL MOVES
Use a single character to get the gold in all three competitions. Select the "Trick Tutorial" option on the extras menu to view that skater's special moves.

OFFICER DICK
Collect all thirty tapes in career mode to unlock Officer Dick as a playable character.

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2001

For the following codes, select game options, then select enter cheats. You can enter more than one code at a time.

NO GRAPHICS EXCEPT THE BALL AND PLAYERS

Enter WTOTL.

MAKE THE BATTERS/RUNNERS FLY AFTER OUTS AND THE TEAM FLY BACK TO DUGOUT AFTER INNING

Enter FLYAWAY.

NO TEXTURES

Enter MYEYES.

SMOKE TRAILS BEHIND BALL

Enter WLDWLDWST.

GIGANTIC BALL

Enter BCHBLKTPTY.

TINY PLAYERS

Enter TOMTHUMB.

TURN TEAM INTO LIZARDS

Select MLB Play, then Exhibition. After choosing teams, select Kauffman Stadium in the Stadium Select option. If you can hit either sign that reads "Win A Lizard," you will automatically turn your whole team into lizards.

CRAZY TAXI

ANOTHER DAY MODE

Press R at the driver select screen, then press and hold R again while you select your crazy cabbie of choice. You will now see the words "Another Day" appear on screen, followed by a car horn. This will change the game slightly with new fare locations and altered starting positions.

EXPERT MODE

To switch off both Destination Markers and Arrows, press and hold L+Start and R+Start right before the driver select screen appears.

NO ARROWS

Press and hold R+Start before the driver select screen appears. If you did it correctly, the message "No Arrows" will appear. This will switch off the directional arrows.

NO DESTINATION MARK

Press and hold L+Start before the driver select screen comes up. If you did it correctly, the message "No Destination Mark" will appear.

UNDERWATER PASSENGER

Here are the directions to pick up the snorkeling fare:

Drive straight and pick up the first orange person right in front of you.

After you get to her destination, to the left by the wall there is a yellow fare, she will want to go somewhere by the beach.

After you get her to her destination, you will be right next to the beach and you will see the green marker for someone under the water, drive right in and pick her up

UNLOCH CARS AND BIKES

At the character selection screen, quickly press L, R, L, R, L, R. Then, select a character to drive a bike instead of a taxi. Alternatively, complete all sixteen Crazy Box levels to unlock the Special Taxi for each character, which is selectable in crazy box, arcade, or original modes. To select the bike in crazy box mode, scroll to the right of Gus at the character selection screen. To select the bike in arcade or original mode, press Up at the character selection screen.

STAR WARS: EPISODE ONE RACER

To unlock the hidden podracers, just beat the following races and times, or else you're nothing better than bantha poodoo.

SEBULBA

The Boonta Classic - Galactic Circuit
Lap Time: 02:04:210 - Race Time: 06:20:012

ALDAR BEEDO

Beedo's Wild Ride - Amateur Circuit
Lap Time: 01:02:986 - Race Time: 03:16:697

ARTTS TREYELL

Howler Gorge - Semipro Circuit
Lap Time: 01:31:370 - Race Time: 04:48:510

MAWHONIC

Andobi Mtn. Run - Galactic Circuit
Lap Time: 01:39:309 - Race Time: 05:05:648

SLIDE PARAMITA

AP Centrum - Invitational Circuit
Lap Time: 00:58:410 - Race Time: 03:03:260

CLEGG HOLDFAST

Aquilaris Classic - Amateur Circuit
Lap Time: 01:04:700 - Race Time: 03:16:926

BULLSEYE NAVIOR

Sunken City - Semipro Circuit
Lap Time: 01:52:620 - Race Time: 05:43:101

ARH BUMPY ROOSE

Bumpy's Breakers - Semipro Circuit
Lap Time: 02:09:358 - Race Time: 06:47:380

WAN SANDAGE

Scrapper's Run - Semipro Circuit
Lap Time: 00:44:904 - Race Time: 02:23:978

BOZZIE BARANTA

Abyss - Invitational Circuit
Lap Time: 01:02:639 - Race Time: 03:12:934

NEVA KEE

Baroo Coast - Semipro Circuit
Lap Time: 01:38:300 - Race Time: 04:59:640

BEN QUADINAROS

Inferno - Invitational Circuit
Lap Time: 00:59:549 - Race Time: 03:04:160

TEEMTO PAGALIES

Mon Gazza Speedway - Amateur Circuit
Lap Time: 00:16:072 - Race Time: 00:52:081

MARS GUO

Spice Mine Run - Amateur Circuit
Lap Time: 01:29:470 - Race Time: 04:30:880

BOLES ROOR

Zugga Challenge - Semipro Circuit
Lap Time: 02:01:261 - Race Time: 06:10:897

FUD SANG

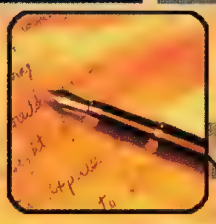
Vengeance - Amateur Circuit
Lap Time: 01:16:880 - Race Time: 03:51:921

TOY DAMPNER

Executioner - Galactic Circuit
Lap Time: 00:31:540 - Race Time: 04:42:310

readers

FALLOUT



Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to: **Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).**

Dear GR,

My name is Paul Braddock. I'm an Australian Videographic artist for broadcast TV. I own a Dreamcast, and I buy your magazine and enjoy your enlightening reviews and articles. If you've got a moment I would like to run a few things by you...

I know you must be busy, so I'll try and be brief. None of this really concerns you, but I would value your opinion/thoughts. Www.dreamcast.com.au is the official ozisoft sponsored website for the Sega Dreamcast, and if you ever go there for some reason and check out the forum, you will no doubt be stunned by all the upset Australian DC owners and their fears and disillusionment. Don't get me wrong, all of them love Sega and the Dreamcast, but are bitterly angry with the Australian distributor "OZISOFT"; the company seems hell bent on undermining its own product with lack of customer support through a total lack of product support. I hope the DC is doing well over there (America), because over hear it seems sadly destined to suffocate. Ozisoft initially screwed the launch with no available internet access for the DC (people are still waiting for browser discs) and since then have done very little to promote the machine. I myself have not seen a single TV commercial; no one in this country knows what a Dreamcast is!

You're probably wondering what all this has to do with you? I just wanted the views of someone in the know. We have heard rumors of Sega of Europe stepping in and giving Ozisoft a few pointers. Have you heard anything? I know this isn't your territory, but this you can answer, as someone who plays and tests all manner of games and consoles: how do you think the DC is going? In America at least, is it getting support over there? Sorry for ranting and not making much sense, it's about 3 a.m. right now, I'm falling asleep as I am typing.

There are thousands of DC owners over here desperately searching for a light at the end of the tunnel for our $500 paper weight (that's what it'll be unless Ozisoft pulls its finger out) any chance of Sega of America giving Ozisoft a kick up the rear?

Thanks for hearing me out,
Great mag,
Sincerely,
Paul Braddock
[end rant.]

After reading this, SOA may indeed insert a boot into Ozisoft's backside. Sega can ill afford any glitches that could potentially cost them precious customers. Over here we've got a great TV ad campaign going. First we had a Matrix-meets-Akira-style Apocalypse spot that was so polished you could see yourself in the skin-tight leather the amazing asian star, Agent S, was wearing. Soon after began the current run of spots featuring a world of Sega characters hanging out within the console itself, under the orange triangle that illuminates when you ignite the system. We've got incredible third-party support as well. The PS2 launch seemed to egg developers on, contrary to popular opinion (whatever that is outside of GR) and now it seems everyone has a DC lineup. I'm shocked that a market the size of Australia would be treated with such disregard, especially in terms of online support. Sega has just proposed a free Dreamcast when you sign them up as your ISP for two years and committed 100 million dollars to the new online venture.We'll certainly forward your concerns to the proper personnel at Sega. Perhaps after things get patched we'll fly down for a look at the Aussie gaming scene. It's good to know you're getting your Gamers' Republic!

Dear GR,

What is your opinion of Sega's Sega.com plan and offering free DCs and a keyboard? I think it is brilliant. User base is what is important for both software revenue and to get online play off the ground. Plus, and this is the most diabolical benefit, if people do this deal they have essentially locked themselves into using their DCs for at least the next two years. In other words, if 6 months down the road they go, "Dang, I want a PS2," they will either have to own both or get rid of their DC, but still be locked into the ISP deal. Now I know that Sega.com also works for PCs, but Sega has still increased their chance that people will stick with the DC. Ingenious. Plus, it's obvious that when PS2 launches, Sega will at least have a deal for people to get the DC for free. Hmmmmm. Third parties I hope will stand up and take notice, especially the point of them likely sticking with the DC for two years. That's two years of buying for third parties.

John Gilbert

Certainly user base is important, but at what cost? Look at it this way: to get the free Dreamcast, one is obligated to Sega.com's ISP for two years at a cost of $21.95 per month. That works out to over $526. So much for the free Dreamcast. And what if after a year you decide you've had your fill of online DC gaming? What then? Two years is a long time to be tied to one service, and I'd like to caution gamers to put a little thought into this deal before rushing out for their "free" system.

I can't wait to play Phantasy Star Online, but the way I see it, one is better off simply buying a Dreamcast and using a slightly cheaper ISP that can be cancelled or at least switched at any time. Remember, you get nothing for free in this world. And if the point of this experiment by Sega is to woo users who can't afford a Dreamcast, $21.95 per month isn't exactly chump change, and for cash-strapped families, this is roughly the cost of basic cable, a much more attractive offer to the average household. -Mike Hobbs

And now here with a rebuttal : Dave Halverson...

I beg to differ. This is a win-win no matter how you slice it and one of the coolest things I have ever seen after 10 years in the industry. For a family that can't afford a Dreamcast, by simply switching ISPs, they can now bless their child with a shiny new console. Plus, now Mom and Dad are hooked up on a cool ISP, not some dreary iwon snoozefest or what have you. Whether the kid plays online or dives into any number of great DC titles, everyone wins. For those of us already-proud DC owners we get $200.00 back from Sega for simply switching to an ISP run by a video-game company. Hell, I'd do that anyway. The current bevy of ISPs are beyond boring to say the least. Booting up my computer to Sega everyday will be a delight. Anyone who questions this strategy is either jealous, or hasn't thought it through.

If Sega can afford to keep it going, I see this equating to massive support for a console off to a great start.

(Our apologies for not responding to the outpouring of concern we received regarding Everquest and the seemingly torturous perils that its patrons are facing. This issue demands a certain amount of research before we throw our hat into the er, realm, so we'll chime in next month.)

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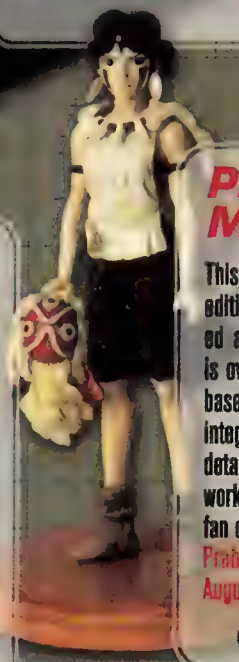

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▸ Oni, continued from page 21

GR: Do you make a game for the highest common denominator and dumb it down for the lesser hardware, or develop it for the lesser hardware and easily port it on to the more sophisticated systems? That seems easier but it kinda sucks for the guy with the best system. Do you guys ponder such things or leave that to the suits?

AS: See, that's what's great about making games at Bungie, and being a company that both develops and publishes, there aren't any suits, and there is no wall between development and publishing. We all have one common goal, which is doing what's best for the game, and bringing the development team's vision to as many gamers as possible.

SH: I don't think this question is really relevant anymore. There simply isn't duff hardware out there any more. It's all incredible. We regard ourselves as a cutting-edge console publisher, although we do publish the odd PC game. In the past, it was a major problem, especially with the Grand Theft Auto franchise, where our ambitions were so huge, and we simply didn't have the hardware to support our ambitions, but on all of the new systems, from Dreamcast on, this simply isn't the case. Every machine has its quirks and problems, but all are massively improved on anything previously, and can only be compared to the best PC systems out there.

GR: So what truly makes Oni different?

AS: Well, first of all, making a third-person action game that blends hand-to-hand combat with gunplay is a revolutionary style of gameplay. But deeper than that, what's really unique is the animation system we're using which allows both of these types of action to coexist in the same simple control scheme, and lets the player easily perform some very complex moves. Disarming is a good example: an empty-handed player can enter a room full of armed opponents, and can in one swift move attack one of them, break their arm, steal their gun and, if they're fast enough, mow down the rest. Disarming and stealing a weapon is a move which is both hand-to-hand and weapons combat, and it's a pretty straightforward move—even new players can intentionally do this with just a little practice. It's the animation system which makes this possible, which is revolutionary. **- *Brady Fiechter***

▸ Tomb Raider, continued from page 65

The gameplay in Last Revelation is a return to the exploration roots of the original Tomb Raider (sans the newness and discovery it offered around every corner) with elements from the last two Raiders wedged in, such as the use of vehicles and real-time integrated cinemas. The vehicle portions are by no stretch of the imagination finely tuned aspects of the game, but they do provide diversity, and integrate the levels nicely. During the gameplay, however, I found the game's music, or inexcusable lack of it, to be the one fatal flaw, chiming in sporadically like the first game, but for even shorter durations. Just as each somber melody begins to fill your soul, they abruptly and prematurely pull the plug, dropping you back into the silence that occupies most of the proceedings. I resorted to the *Fifth Element* soundtrack to counter the silence, but wasn't too thrilled about having to do so. I realize that silence is a staple in the series, but not to this extent, and who cares anyway—it's still a flawed concept. Even the slightest ambient arrangements can add greatly to a game's atmosphere (see Nightmare Creatures II).

Now that I've lambasted one of my favorite series, let it be said that Lara earned a spot in my heart when she first went careening down that waterfall in the original Tomb Raider. I have thoroughly enjoyed her escapades and I respect Core for helping pave the way in the genre. I understand that Tomb Raider is no longer just a game but a business, and like other ventures that hit the mainstream, this means corners must be cut and deadlines tightened like a noose around the developers necks to get product to market, resulting in a lot of déjà vu gameplay. Still, there are plenty of classic Tomb Raider moments to be had in Last Revelation when I put all my critiquing aside, and I was happy to be playing another Tomb Raider regardless of its flaws. In the end, however, I can only recommend this game to the hardest of the hardcore Tomb Raider fan. If you just can't get enough of that traditional Tomb Raider gameplay, then you'll probably love it. Because when you make a date with Lara, even though you know you're going to have to put up with her start-and-stop gameplay, clunky interface and simplistic architecture (complete with rock-solid boobs that never move), you still can't seem to have her home by midnight.

Me, I'm holding out for Core to innovate on the latest batch of consoles, like they once did on the Genesis and PlayStation. Chuck Rock and Wonderdog are still waiting for their swan songs. **GR**

▸ Nightmare Creatures 2, continued from page 70

of the gameplay is consumed learning how to defeat each monster while suffering as little energy loss as possible. Life ampules and special attack items are laced strategically throughout each vast area, placed just where you should need them if you're performing well. Curiously, however, when you die, if you don't choose to use one of your five continues and quit and restart instead, you'll never lose a life, giving you plenty of chances to dial in each segment. The simple combo scheme allows Herbert to sever the limbs off of most of the creatures, making the remaining chops much more satisfying, because they can't defend themselves. Still, there are those that take ample skills to dispose of and so there is plenty of strategy to the fighting. The really special aspects of the killing are the fatalities, which differ for each enemy. A more graphic telling of blatant axe-chopping, blood-spraying death you'll not find (there's a quote for the nightly news).

Graphically, the game delivers in spades, easily one of the best-looking PS games in recent memory. There's a fair share of the usual PS polygonal annoyances, such as warping, and collision that's easy to get hung up on, but not enough to affect the overall experience adversely. Controlling Herbert takes a little getting used to as well. He has no strafe except when locked in battle, nor a quick turn around at his disposal, but once you come to terms with the analog steering of his decrepit body, you'll find the control quite suitable. The one major flaw that I did find in the game was Herbert's voice. For a guy who's been locked away, beaten, tested on, and hacks ghouls to death with no remorse, he talks like a proper English gentleman throughout the quest's narration. Against the games gritty soundtrack and darkest of dark themes, his speaking mannerisms seem way out of place. They only exist to further the story between levels anyway, so it's nothing to lose any sleep over. I suppose the devilishly wicked intro accompanied by a pounding performance by Rob Zombie more then makes up for the voice. The cutscenes, too, are splendid and feature some of the coolest rain effects I have ever seen.

Honestly, about four hours into the game I was beginning to tire of Nightmare Creatures II, thinking it was getting somewhat redundant. But my patience paid off, because the game really opened up soon after. Nightmare Creatures II is a slow burn, a game with its own haunting rhythm that, as an overall package, is extremely effective at dragging you into its gloom and doom. It isn't a ghoulish Tomb Raider clone, nor is it a beat-'em-up with a monster guise. It's a little bit of both: a deep psychological action thriller that builds to an excellent climax. If you're into the macabre side of gaming, or just horror in general, it doesn't get much better. **GR**

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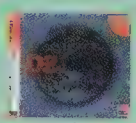
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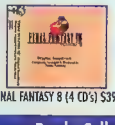
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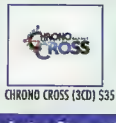
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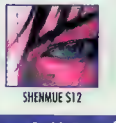
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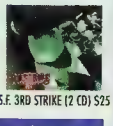
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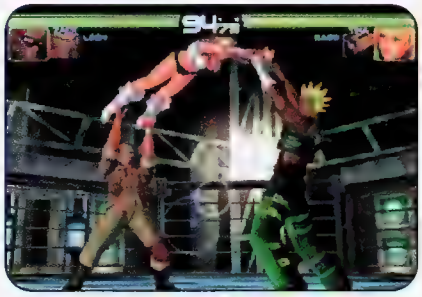
▸ Dead or Alive 2, continued from page 36

PlayStation 2 in only a few short months, and the game is a visual powerhouse that surpasses the already striking Dreamcast game. Three new stages have been added, some of the levels have been expanded with additional tiers, and there is a richer, crisper, more natural texture to the game. If you have the luxury of choosing, the PS2 is the superior game. **GR**



▸ Mars Colony Music interview, continued from page 115

GR: One of the best things (as you well know) about Japanese music CDs is the packaging and sleeve design. Will you maintain this special look and quality with your packaging?

MC: Our art director, Jason Campos, does an amazing job at creating eye popping artwork for the CD packaging. We're definitely capturing the fun of the Japanese releases and intend to surpass them. Capcom has been overwhelmingly pleased with the artwork for our first two releases.

GR: When you bring a CD over are you able to add any extras like previously unheard tracks or remixes?

MC: We'll be more than happy to add extras as we get them. We're currently planning to do some remixes which will be really fun. We want to get some of this stuff into clubs and other venues!

GR: Although the U.S. gaming audience is growing at a fever pitch, do you find that the vast majority seem to be casual users? How will you market to these people or, will you even bother? I suppose the enthusiast is who you're here to serve. Your comments?

MC: Sure, our primary target is the hardcore, but the music has drastically changed throughout the past ten years. These soundtracks deserve mainstream recognition and that's what we're going after. I think a Grammy would look really nice sitting on my desk.

GR: Tell us about your name – Mars Colony. You know, they say that someday soon we may colonize Mars and, with the introduction of new nanotechnologies, live 200 years or more, with a little help from the machines. You'll have the hottest name on the planet!

MC: Thanks! The Mars Colony name represents a new beginning, a fresh outlook. We're pioneering an outlet for these gaming soundtracks to be heard at full volume!

GR: Well, Kei, we wish you and Mars Colony Music all the success in the world. It's a great thing you're doing. Keep us posted in the future on the company's progress and keep the good stuff coming!

MC: Thanks, now let me get back to playing some Dance Dance Revolution.

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JULY 2000

With the Dreamcast really just getting started, the PlayStation 2 making an enticing trail of hotshot hints and promises in its launch wake, Nintendo standing on a cloud of uncertainty, and new pop-on-the-block Microsoft spinning a web of provocative previews, the video game industry has never seen such exciting and interesting times. Dump all of this energy into one space, invite the entire industry to revel in it, and the result is one gigantic party on the planet—the Electronic Entertainment Expo, better known as E3. Will there be a Dolphin present? Sonic Adventure 2? PS2 games that will truly rock our world? Get the answers next month.

ISSUE #26

NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

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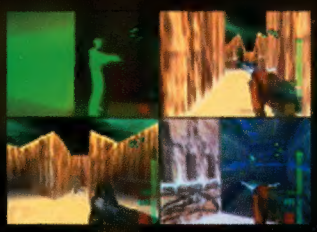

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Sega Dreamcast
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